

Series: Second Chances	Reference: Titus 2:11-14	Title: New Day, New Mercies	Date: 01.02.2022
Website Writeup:			
As we start the new year, let's remember God's grace brings salvation to everyone giving us the ability to grow in faith & holiness. We can trust in God's grace to grow us in righteousness this year, with assurance of salvation because God is the god of second chances - every new day brings new mercies!			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

Turn with me to a short passage in Titus 2:11-14 on p816 of your pew Bibles. As we start the new year, let's remember God's grace brings salvation to everyone giving us the ability to grow in faith & holiness. We can trust in God's grace to grow us in righteousness this year, with assurance of salvation because God is the god of second chances - every new day brings new mercies!

Titus 2:11-14 reads...*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness & worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright & godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God & Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness & to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

Pastor Mike Howerton tells a story about how grace works. He recounts the time he received a 2nd ticket in two years for expired car tags. He was at fault. He went to the court & told the judge, "I throw myself on the mercy of the court!" Impressed, or maybe amused, the judge waived the penalty. Like that judge, God waives the penalty for all those who throw themselves upon his mercy.¹

Although Mike's correct in his illustration, the grace of God goes well beyond simply paying our past debt! Many people live under the wrong assumption that when they come to faith it's like being overdrawn on a bank account. That we're in negative numbers, and the bank keeps charging us \$35 for each bounced check & we just get deeper in debt. But someone comes along & says, "I'll pay your debt & bring you to zero balance in your account."

But from that point on we believe we must work to keep our account in positive numbers. People wrongly believe, "Yes, Jesus paid my debt, but now I must work at keeping my record clean. I must continually earn favor with Him." They live under the assumption that if their account gets into negative numbers once again, they're right back in the same predicament trying to earn favor with God - which only creates a life of guilt, shame & even a fear of not being good enough, or losing ones salvation! But God's grace doesn't stop at zeroing out our account, God actually floods our account with unlimited riches! That's Gospel truth!

¹ Mike Howerton, *Glorious Mess* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), excerpted in "The God of Second Chances," *Family Life*, [https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/faith/essentials-faith/growing-in-your-faith/the-god-of-second-chances/faith/the-god-of-second-chances/](https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/faith/essentials-faith/growing-in-your-faith/the-god-of-second-chances/faith/the-god-of-second-chances/faith/the-god-of-second-chances/)

When we repent in Christ, Jesus pays for our sin - past, present & future! Scripture teaches, we're adopted & grafted into the family of God for eternity. As Ephesians 1:3-9 says...*"Praise be to the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy & blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure & will - ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom & understanding, ⁹he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ..."*

Our accounts have been flooded! We've become children with full rights as heirs to all the Lords riches! As Romans 8:17 states...*"Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God & co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."* Christ's perfect record's imputed to us - when God the father looks at us in Christ, He sees the perfect record of His Son, Jesus! Adopted into God's family due to Christ's work on the cross, we're now heirs to all the fortune of God.

Titus 3:3-8 says the same & more...*"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived & enslaved by all kinds of passions & pleasures. We lived in malice & envy, being hated & hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness & love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth & renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good."*

Justified meaning that due to Christ we've been declared righteous in the sight of God the Father having eternal life with Him which can never be taken away. The reason for this is that, it's the grace & the keeping power of God that gives us security. Salvation is affected & maintained by the grace & power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. So, Pastor Mike's correct, but the story simply doesn't go far enough. We must repent, which means to turn away from our sin, and turn towards Christ for salvation. But in Christ, as 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, we become a new creation, the old's gone, the new's come! We've been washed & renewed as God lavishes His grace on us! It's like that new cheeseburger at Red Robin, where you not only get a cheeseburger, but a vat of melted cheese to dip it into! It's just over the top!

A parallel passage would be Ephesians 2:1-10...*"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions & sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world & of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the*

cravings of our flesh & following its desires & thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

What's this tell us? 1) Like Titus 3 it says we were spiritually dead. Dead people don't seek God in their spiritual deadness. 2) We were under the control of something else in that state. 3) And in that state we lived disobedient to the life-giving ways of God. 4) Errant desire & thought controlled our lives. And 5) this made us objects of God's wrath. The reason being, God is holy. Sin & holiness are like oil & water, the two cannot mix. Therefore, we must be purified of sin to stand in the presence of God. And, it continues in v4 to tell us how that happens...

4But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. 6And God raised us up with Christ & seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - 9not by works, so that no one can boast.

This tells us, that it's God's complete doing which brings us to righteousness in Christ! Due to His great love 1) He made us alive from our dead sinful state. That 2) this was fully by His mercy & grace. Let's take a moment to define grace & mercy...to be at someone's mercy' means you're without defense against that person as they have power over you. John Locke defined it as "the power to act according to discretion, for the public good, without the prescription of the Law, and sometimes even against it." So, God had power & right over us as Creator to punish due to our iniquity, but chose to forgo His divine right & forgive even when we deserved wrath!

Grace is the help given to us by God because God desires us to have it, not because of anything we've done to earn it. A gift, generous, free, unexpected & undeserved. 'Grace is when God gives us what we don't deserve, and mercy is when God doesn't give us what we do deserve'.

Then 3) God seated us forever in the heavenly realms - our new & everlasting position with Christ, in order to show His glory & kindness to all peoples throughout history! And finally, 4) this faith by which we receive mercy & grace is even a work of God in us!

We might say of another, "He's a great man of faith," as if he conjured it on his own. But Scripture teaches we never had faith until God gave it! Therefore, being good has nothing to do with obtaining salvation - it's all God's doing! We respond only as He enables! Think of the criminal on the cross hanging next to Jesus - that guy did nothing to enter heaven, but Jesus proclaimed in Luke 23:43, "*Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.*" Isaiah 64:6 is true when it says, "*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*" No matter how good you've been, everyone needs repentance in Christ.

Then, Paul ends, as Titus 3 does, by saying...¹⁰*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*"

This tells us when, and by what means Good Works come into play, which is after salvation. Being good does nothing to gain our position in Christ, since like Romans 3:23 says, *all have sinned & fallen short of the glory of God*. Rather, God saved us for good works in order to glorify Himself through our lives. Therefore, neither do good works keep us in good favor with God, that's fully accomplished in Jesus work on the Cross. They're simply an expression of gratitude for what's been done for us in Christ!

However, it's important to remember, this mercy & grace wasn't just an overlooking of our sin, as if God says, "Oh you little rascal, I'll overlook that." Sin demands payment. Something had to die. It was accomplished through the death penalty meted out on the Incarnate God who entered History in the person of Jesus Christ! God's grace & mercy came at great cost to Himself! God the Son died in our place overcoming the grave to open the way of salvation to anyone who'd receive it so that we could be sealed for eternity with God the Holy Spirit!

Which is why Titus 2 says God's grace...*teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness & worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright & godly lives in this present age...eager to do what is good.*

So, as God calls us by grace through faith imparted to us, we live in constant gratitude reflective of & growing in His likeness/character. We seek always, as God's children, to constantly repent & turn towards Christ when we find ourselves returning to sinful desire & thought. Not because we have something to prove to God, but exactly because we don't! *Proverbs 28:13 says, "People who conceal their sins will not prosper. But if they confess & turn from them, they will receive mercy"* (NLT). In another translation, *"He gets another chance"* (TLB). We're constantly given second chances because our bank account's full in Christ - constant access to new mercies & grace daily! You're not the culmination of your mistakes - you're holy & dearly loved children & heirs to God's kingdom! The purpose of repentance in the Christian life isn't to earn favor again & again, but rather to live in the freedom we have in Christ glorifying God in gratitude!

Mike Gives us another illustration...Picture a white canvas, representing your potential in life. Now imagine you've thrown dark oil paint at it, splattering it with red (symbolizing your selfishness), black (for your idolatry) & teal (representing your horrific style choices in the 80's). The paint visually communicates what our sin, our stain, our running from God looks like. We think, "That's it; now I've made a mess of things. It's all I can see. Game over." But it's not. Those simply become the colors which God takes & uses to paint the masterpiece of you. Your past mistakes don't define you, but as we constantly repent & turn towards Jesus each time they reveal God's glorious work in us! And over time, grace teaches us the best way to live, and the mistakes become less & less - we grow up as we grow old in faith!

I had friend in ministry with me in Indonesia. At one point he left the field, confessing he'd spent the night with a prostitute. He stepped away from ministry & went to work at repentance. It almost cost his marriage & sullied his reputation for a time. Yet, he had stopped running from God realizing the mess he'd made & began, very humbly, to do what God said. He confessed, begged forgiveness, began living in purity & pursued God. He submitted himself to church correction with a restoration team. They met together over a course of time for study, accountability, counsel & prayer.

It's been years since his confession. His wife forgave him & at some point he began ministry again. Everyone felt his story & journey of healing would be encouraging to those who assume God's grace doesn't extend into their mess. God is good. He's living proof of grace.

Grace is an immensely vital doctrine in Christianity & what sets it apart from all other religions. A doctrine with consequences, not just on a lofty theological level, but also on a practical everyday level.

Christians should confess what Paul did in 1 Corinthians 15:10... *“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them - yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”* Paul would agree with Dallas Willard who said, ‘God isn’t against effort, only against earning.’ We can’t earn our salvation, but once we are saved, by His grace we can make effort in the Christian life to glorify God even when we fall short. The believer understands the grace of God is *“training us to renounce ungodliness & worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age”* (Titus 2:12). Grace is both gift & teacher.

In an interview, Max Lucado said, “Grace is the voice that calls us to change, and then gives us the power to pull it off....When grace happens, we receive not a nice compliment from God, but a new heart.”²

At New Year's, people make all sorts of resolutions: lose weight, save money, be present for people, etc. But do we make faith resolutions? Strengthening our faith through grace in the coming year? Throughout Christian history, the Church has practiced ‘means of grace’ to grow in faithfulness & holiness, gifts given by God to help us grow in grace. Most notably these ‘means of grace’ have included Scripture, prayer as well as sacraments & ordinances³, such as Baptism & the Lord's Supper. These things serve to remind us of our position under the grace & mercy of God our savior!

² “Grace: More than We Deserve, Greater than We Imagine: An Interview with Max Lucado,” *Christian Bible Studies*, May 7, 2013, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/spiritualformation/grace-more-than-we-deserve-greater-than-we-imagine.html>

³ Christina Fox, “Old Paths for a New Year,” *The Gospel Coalition*, December 30, 2019, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/old-paths-new-year/>

John Wesley writes, “By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words, or action ordained by God & appointed for this end: to be the ordinary channels by which He might convey to individuals either preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace. I use this expression ‘means of grace’ because I know none better; and because it’s been generally used in the Christian church for many ages.”⁴

Wesley expands on the ‘means of grace’, continuing, “The chief of these means are prayer (whether in secret or with the congregation); searching the scriptures (which implies reading, hearing & meditating on them); and receiving the Lord’s Supper: eating bread & drinking wine in remembrance of our Lord Jesus. And these we believe to be ordained of God as the ordinary channels of conveying His grace to the souls of individuals.” Yet he’s also quick to caution that “all outward means, if separated from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot lead to any degree either to the knowledge or love of God.”⁵ Meaning, these are only reminders of & access to what’s been done for us already.

We must allow the Holy Spirit to use these means to transform our hearts & lives as we go into the new year. “We’re not transformed by our ability to read Scripture, or how well we listen to it preached, or how fervently we pray, or how faithfully we take communion. We’re transformed by the Spirit’s use of these means, by God’s grace & for Christ’s glory.”⁶

So, as we start the new year, let’s remember God’s grace brings salvation to everyone giving us the ability to grow in faith & holiness. We can trust in God’s grace to grow us in righteousness this year, with assurance of salvation because God is the god of second chances - every new day brings new mercies!

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness & worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright & godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God & Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness & to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:11-14)

“...It is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast....we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

⁴ John Wesley, “The Means of Grace,” *The Essential Works of John Wesley* [Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2011], 191

⁵ John Wesley, “The Means of Grace,” 191–92

⁶ Christina Fox, “Old Paths for a New Year”