

TOUGH GRACE IN DIFFICULT PLACES A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF TITUS

STUDY SEVEN

Tough Grace

Titus 2:11–15

Grace does not free us to sin. Grace frees us to obey. By knowing Christ, I have the power to say yes to the things that please God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

CORE values consist of morals, beliefs, and practices that help lead us toward the ideal life. They define who we are, and they give us meaning and hope.

A core value is not like preferring chocolate over vanilla, Apple over Android, or sandals over sneakers. *Freedom*, for example, is one of humanity’s highest values. People risk everything to escape tyranny to live freely. *Love* inspires people to sacrifice themselves, even lay down their lives, for the sake of others. A cherished value for Christians is *grace*, by which God rescues people lost in sin and stirs their total devotion to Him.

We cling to our values like lifelines in a storm. One of the perils of embracing values, however, is the reality that some will abuse them. In fact, the greater the value, the greater the abuse. Some exploit their freedom to live lawlessly. In the name of love, some take advantage of others’ vulnerable hearts. And others twist grace into a license to sin because grace “covers it all.”

To protect our values, we must get tough sometimes. *Tough laws* guard freedom from collapsing into anarchy. To stop abuse, people must show *tough love* by setting boundaries. In Titus’ situation, Paul recommended *tough grace* by urging him to stand against grace-abusers. Grace not only saves us but also it calls us “to turn from godless living,” Paul wrote (Titus 2:12).

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll enroll in Paul’s mini-course on grace, in which he sheds light on the brilliant facets of this priceless value as well as its firm limits.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a moment to “praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us” (Ephesians 1:6). Write your prayer below and invite the Spirit to illumine your heart to the wonders of God’s grace.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul opened his letter to Titus with a *blessing of grace*: “May God the Father of Christ Jesus our Savior give you grace” (Titus 1:4); and he closed with a *benediction of grace*: “May God’s grace be with you all” (3:15).

At the center-point, Paul raised a *banner of grace*: “For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people” (2:11). In a few sentences, Paul described how we live under grace regarding four main themes: our salvation, our sanctification, our glorification, and our redemption.



Observation: Living under Grace

The goal of *observation* is to simply see what the passage says, looking for contrasts, comparisons, cause-and-effect, and figures of speech.¹ A good foundation of observation helps us better understand what the passage means. Read [Titus 2:11–15](#) to overview the passage, and then focus on each theme as you answer the questions below.

Grace and Salvation—Titus 2:11

What did Paul say about grace in [Titus 2:11](#)? What key words describe the source of grace, the action of grace, and the effect of grace?

Paul’s image of grace in this verse is of a hero appearing in the nick of time to rescue captives from an enemy. In the next verse, Paul shifts the metaphor from hero to instructor.

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Grace and Sanctification—Titus 2:12

In the first part of *Titus 2:12*, what does grace teach us to avoid?

While the grace of our salvation looks back to when we put our faith in Christ, the grace of our sanctification focuses on the now, “in the present age” (2:12 NASB). How does the grace of God empower us to live in this “evil world” today, according to the second part of *2:12*?

Grace appears at the cross giving us the opportunity to believe. Following the cross, grace instructs God’s people to live now as Christ would have them live.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Grace and Glorification—Titus 2:13

Grace also looks forward to our glorification. What hope did Paul describe in *Titus 2:13*? Take special notice of the title Paul gave Jesus.

Grace points to what’s beyond when we will see Jesus as He is, when He brings us “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!”
(*Jude 1:24 NKJV*) —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Grace and Redemption—Titus 2:14–15

Finally, according to *Titus 2:14–15*, grace redeemed us for what purpose? What must we do “with all authority” (Titus 2:15 NASB)?

Having been redeemed, are we to live as we please? Of course not. We are to live as Christ pleases, and we are able to do so because of grace.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future Grace

After observing the details, let’s consider what Paul intended his audience to understand. Summarize the past, present, and future aspects of grace in *Titus 2:11–15*. How do they work together in our daily walk with Christ?

Referring to the *grace of God* and the *glory of God*, Paul used two forms of the same Greek word for “revealed”—“the grace of God has been revealed” and “the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed” (2:11, 13). The Greek words are the verb *epiphaino* and the noun *epiphaneia*, from which we get *epiphany*, meaning “appearance, manifestation, glorious display.”

How did Paul connect *grace* and *glory*?

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[Titus 2:13](#) is a profound declaration of the deity of Christ. What did Paul say about Christ that left no doubt in his readers' minds that Jesus is God? For an explanation of the Greek grammar that confirms Paul's meaning, consult the notes in the NET Bible on [2:13](#).

Grace has been manifested and personified in the person of the Lord Jesus, and with Him came a rescue for all men. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Power of New Affections

Correlation confirms our interpretation with related passages. In Colossians, Paul explained . . .

- Our identity—“your real life is hidden with Christ in God” (Titus 3:3).
- Our hope—“when Christ, who is your life, is revealed . . . you will share in all his glory” (3:4).
- Our duty—“so put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you” (3:5).

Read [Colossians 3:1–15](#) and write down some of the sins Paul said to put off and the virtues Paul said to put on.

The Puritans referred to the sanctifying process of putting-off and putting-on as replacing our old affections with new affections. The more we love Jesus, the more we love the core values of Jesus and the more we live like Jesus. The less we love the core values of the world, the less we will live like the world.

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How has God’s grace through Christ empowered new affections in you? What have been the results?

There is a new affection that comes and removes the old. Overwhelmed by God’s love and grace, we don’t want to sin. We want to do good deeds. The old drops off and the new emerges with life, color, and beauty. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Embracing Grace, Not Abusing It

We can tie together Paul’s points in a single principle about grace: *When you truly embrace grace, you don’t casually abuse it.* Instead, you live your life so grateful and thrilled with Christ’s life in you now and in the future that old sins don’t interest you. Because grace connects you with Christ, it can be your most cherished value.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll once illustrated the life-changing power of tough grace by using a branch from a live oak tree with fall leaves still attached. He showed the congregation the branch and brought their attention to the leaves. They don’t fall off in the winter, like the leaves of other types of oak trees. Even gale-force winds won’t blow off these leaves. Only in spring, when new life surges through the trunk into the limb and through the branch, will the old leaves drop off.

For Christians, grace is like the new life in the branch. Only when our new affection for Christ surges with the power of grace through our spirit will our old affections drop off.

What “leaves”—old habits—have dropped off as grace has flowed through your life?

How can focusing on grace in your relationship with Christ prompt a surge of new affection?

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As you conclude, use the space below to offer a prayer of praise and gratitude for God’s grace in your salvation, sanctification, glorification, and redemption. Invite the Lord to overwhelm your soul with His grace and fill you with new affection for Him!



A FINAL PRAYER

Write your prayer here:

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2006, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

