

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: February 26, 2012

Where is the Grace of God Taking Us?

by Dan Trygg

"For the grace of God bringing salvation has appeared to all people, instructing us in order that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we might live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, expectantly awaiting the happy hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself on behalf of us in order that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and He might purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. Speak and encourage and expose these things with all assertion. Let no one mentally-avoid what you say." Titus 2:11-16

Without a sense of where we are going, an idea of the distance, direction and destination, and what to expect along the way, it would be easy for us to get distracted along the road of life and never really accomplish the ultimate purposes of God for us, i.e., never really get where we are supposed to be going. Without a roadmap, or an itinerary, we might be dilly-dallying our way along, and think we are making wonderful progress, and yet (though we may *indeed* be making progress) in light of the entire journey we are woefully behind schedule for the pace we need in order to get to the destination within our allotted time. **If we could get the overview, we would pick up the pace, and we would more wisely choose how to spend our time and energy each day.** If we know where we are going, and what will be required to accomplish our goals, we will have a more realistic perspective as to how to prepare and at what pace to proceed. **We could also more effectively evaluate other options in light of our goals.** Will this fit in? Do I have time for this activity?

This passage in Titus provides us with a road map of this sort. It helps us to understand (1.) where we are headed; (2.) what to expect along the way; and, (3.) it even tells us, in general terms, what kinds of things will be required of us in order for us to succeed. Let's take a look.

The grace of God. This is the primary theme of the passage. It is also the main subject of the sentence, which in Greek begins in verse 11 and continues through verse 14. *The grace, or graciousness, of God is the favor, love, or kindness which He extends to us, though we have done nothing to deserve it.* In fact, it is all the more marvelous because, not only did we not deserve it, we have lived in such a way as to be offensive to Him, to actually have earned His rejection and wrath. Yet, instead of our "just deserts", He has gone to extreme effort and expense to show us His good heart toward us. *More than just an attitude of unmerited favor, however, grace is God's provision for us in Christ.* Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins, removed every charge or curse against us, took our old sinful selves with Him to the grave, and made it possible for us to be raised up with Him to a new kind of life as new creatures empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is God's gracious provision for us in Christ. A good way to remember this aspect of grace is by the acrostic, using the letters of the word "GRACE" = God's Riches At Christ's Expense. We don't pay for any of this. God makes it freely available to anyone who is willing to come to Him for salvation and a new life. **Bringing salvation.** This is an interesting grammatical structure in Greek. In English, this is translated as a verb, but in Greek, the word translated as "bringing salvation" is an adjective describing the subject. It tells us more about the specific grace of God being discussed. It is not just God's grace in general, it is the bringing-salvation-grace of God. *It is just one aspect of the much bigger reality of God's grace.* **Appeared to all people.** This is referring especially to the incarnation and earthly mission of Jesus. The Greek verb actually means "was made visible (at a point in time); was manifested or visibly expressed in". This implies that God's grace was in existence before the Christ child was born. That event, however, and the ensuing events of His life, gave clear expression to the felt-graciousness of God toward humankind (the Greek word is the generic word for mankind) that was only known in a shadowy way before that time. **Instructing us.** The word means to "instruct, teach, train, or discipline". *Its focus is to establish a habitual change in behavior.* It is not primarily intellectual, so much as it is experiential. The form is a present tense participle, emphasizing ongoing, continual action. Following the word picture, Paul says that the grace of God trains us, or leads us into different habitual life-patterns by consistently, repeatedly, and ongoingly correcting the undesirable behavior, showing us the expected and desired behavior, and repeatedly encouraging us in it. **in order that ...we might live in this present age.** It is important for us to grasp the bare skeleton of the sentence so that we can plainly understand the agenda of the grace of God in our lives. The "in order that" represents a purpose clause. *The bringing-salvation-grace of God is here to instruct and train us in order that we might live a certain quality of life in this present time.* The very phrase "eternal life", which we use so often to describe what Jesus came to make available to us, is a term that is primarily about *quality* of life, not *quantity*. The word "eternal" is an adjective form of the word translated as "age". What Jesus meant by the term was that He came to make it possible for His followers to experience aspects of the coming kingdom of God *in this present time*, i.e.,

they could have "age-type" life, or "kingdom life" *now*. Christians are to experience, and operate out of, a quality of life that is an incursion of the coming age of the kingdom of God into this present evil age (Gal. 1:4). *That quality of life will be visibly different, because it originates in God, not in our sinful desires.* **Grace is more than God's unmerited favor, or freely offered forgiveness. It is also God's empowerment.** ****Not only are we saved by the grace of God, we are to live by the empowering grace of God.**** We can remember this aspect of grace by using the acrostic: **GRACE = God's Revealed And Continuing Enabling** to live a righteous, holy and power-filled life. God's plan to expand and establish His kingdom here in this world *depends upon our learning to walk according to "age-type" life*, so that the unsaved can see that walking with God is a positive, desirable, "good news" thing.

There is more in the surrounding words and phrases to help us to perceive more of what Paul means.

What will the salvation-bearing-grace of God teach us?

(1.) To live life denying certain negative tendencies. It should not surprise us that in order to live according to a *new* strategy, we must stop living by the *old*. *We must "make room" for a new way, by no longer operating as we have.* The word "denying" is thought to be derived from a negated form of a word which means "to pour forth, to flow". To deny, then, would be to *not* allow one's self to just express, or pour forth, those inner desires. It means to disregard one's own immediate interests and, in that sense, to *not act like your old self*. **(a.) Denying ungodliness.** This word is descriptive more of one's *attitude*, or *inner orientation*, than one's behavior. It is a negated form of the word which means "devotion, reverence toward". Hence, *this word refers to a tendency to live life without regard for God*. It is a general impiety of heart. It is important to see that this is an inner tendency of our fallen humanness. It means that we *already* lean toward moving ahead in life without thinking of what God would think of our choices, or how our choices may affect our relationship with Him. *We must learn to disregard this tendency.* It is the default pattern we have learned, and which comes from our old programming. *Unless we specifically address this, we will unwittingly drift back here again.* **(b.) Denying worldly lusts.** These are the strong passions or desires promoted by this present world system and this present evil age. Again, *we must not give in to the natural tendency to "go with the flow" of our inner passions* that are unhealthy, or out of order. This, too, is a default pattern that has been programmed into our psyche over years, and has actually been encouraged by the world system, in certain ways. *Unless we specifically confront our tendency here, we will find ourselves doing as we have always done.*

(2.) To live life affirming and expressing certain positive qualities. *We cannot sustain a life of self-denial of our old patterns without replacing them with something positive.* Blocking off the flow of immediate self-expression, or self-consuming, is *not* the total answer. Not only will we not be able to sustain this, because of inner emotional pressure, but "being good" is not the same as "not being bad". We cease the old way of living life *in order to get in touch with a new dynamic*, a new source, a new orientation. *We must then learn to express and develop that new flow of life.* **(a.) We might live as-from-a-sound-mind.** The Greek is actually an adverb, "sound-mindedly". *The word literally means safe or healthy thinking, and was specifically used for checking or curbing one's impulses.* This is why some versions translate this word as "soberly" or "with temperance". Behind the restraint, however, is sound thinking. This is the opposite of "just going with the flow". **(b.) We might live righteously.** Another adverb, this one *refers to upright, just, fair, equitable behavior.* With regard to God and man, we are to live as righteous. We are to affirm righteousness, inside and out. We do not judge actions by the world's standards anymore, but by God's. *Note the shift of orientation.* **(c.) We might live as-good-devoted-in-heart.** This adverb is from the opposite of the word translated as "ungodliness". *This means having an attitude that values, esteems, reverences and worships God.* This is not to be a *compartment* in our lives; *it is to be the way we live day-in and day-out.* If the tendency is to *not* keep God in knowledge (Rom. 1:28), the grace of God would teach us to do *exactly the opposite*, to keep Him uppermost in our devotion and dedication, i.e., *to practice the presence of God* and to keep the passions of our heart warm toward Him. **(d.) We might live anticipating the happy hope of Christ's return.** The reality of Jesus' return helps to keep everything in perspective. *Life is not just about the here and now.* There is a future age beyond this present one. Christ *is* coming back for His own, and to judge the world. He appeared once before as the bringing-salvation-grace of God. He will appear again as the glory of the Great God, and as the Savior of us.

Why did He come? He gave Himself on our behalf in order that [purpose clause]

***He might redeem us away from all lawlessness** -- every disregard of and disobedience to God's ways.

****He might cleanse for Himself a people for His own possession** -- we might be *His*. Cf. Ex. 19:5.

-- **a people zealous for good deeds.** This is a high value to Him, definitely part of where the grace of God will lead us. Cf. Tit. 3:8,14; Eph. 2:8-10. Next to *agapē* love and unity, acts of service are among the greatest expressions of the reality of God's kingdom.

Now Hear This!! -- Paul told Titus, "Speak and encourage and expose these things with all assertion. Let no one mentally-avoid *what you say*." In practical terms, this means that *this teaching applies to us all, ...to YOU!* **This is the reality of what the grace of God in our lives is all about.** *Don't miss out on God's program.* Get in tune with it!