



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Titus 2:11-15

“God's School: Matriculation and Graduation”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Today is our fifth of our series of seven studies of the Epistle to Titus. And for our Scripture reading we are turning to chapter 2 and verse 11, and reading the remainder of the chapter. Remember that Paul has stressed in his introduction that the truth is after Godliness, and that really is the theme of the entire book. The truth that we hold should result in Godliness of life, and then he gives Titus some instructions regarding the appointment of elders, and Titus is to carry out that responsibility appointing elders who are qualified to the degree that Paul sets forth beginning at the 5th verse of chapter 1 and continuing through the remainder of that chapter. He warns about the false preachers, that they confess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate.

But Titus, on the other hand contrary to their false teaching, he is to teach the things which become sound doctrine, and in the opening verses of the second chapter remember he has set for the requirements and the responsibilities for life, for various age group and sexes. The aged men are to be sober, grave, temperate, and other things Paul sets forth. The aged women likewise are to be in behaviors becoming holiness. Certain things are suggested concerning them, apparently weakness that each group has. The young men, the younger women are to be taught by the elders. The elderly women

through example primarily and instructions are given them. The young men also are exhorted to be sober minded, and finally some words for servants near the end of the chapter.

It’s interesting this morning as I was coming into the auditorium for the first service, a man came up with a smile on his face, and said that the Scripture is being fulfilled that you referred to last week that the women should be workers at home. He said he arrived home shortly after that to find his wife, scrubbing the kitchen floor, and he thanked me [laughter] for giving the exhortation that produced that, but she was smiling and she seemed to enjoy it too, at least now after it’s over.

In verse 11 the apostle is going to show us the redemptive foundation of these responsibilities, and so we are going to begin now at verse 11.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, (Apparently that word Savior in verse 10 suggested to him, this. The servants are to adorn the doctrine. Of God our Savior in all things.) For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (or age); Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”

Now, may I interrupt the Scripture reading for a just a moment. The Authorized Version text, which I have just read suggests perhaps that the great God is a separate person from our Savior Jesus Christ. Now of course there are three persons within the one Godhead, the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit, but the Greek text actually is constructed in such a way the correct translation of that verses should be, “And the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Which indicates that Paul is really speaking of only one of the persons of the Godhead there, our Lord Jesus Christ whom he calls then

our great God. It is one of the texts in which God sets forth the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ so,

“Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise Thee.”

May God’s blessing attend the reading of his Word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our great heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the ministry of the word again. We know that Thou art sovereign. We know that Thou art supreme in the universe that Thou hast created, and we know that we do not meet by accident. We know that Thou hast a purpose for us in this hour, and now Lord we pray as those who are completely dependant upon Thee. We know we are whether we realize it or not, we are dependant upon Thee. Thou art the God in whose hand our breath is. We pray Lord that Thou wilt minister to us as we look into the word of God and may it bring forth fruit in our lives. May the end result be that Thy name may be praised by men, honored and glorified among men? And Father, we pray that if there should be one person in this auditorium or in the church parlor who has not yet come to know Jesus Christ in a personal way, may this very moment and hour of exposition be the time in which they turn to him who has loved us and given himself for us. We pray that the grace of God that bringeth salvation which has appeared to all men, may in a subjective and personal way that is within our hearts appear to any who do not know him, and so Lord we with confidence commit the meeting to Thee.

We would particularly remember several, Lord, who are physically not well. And we ask, oh God, that Thou wilt minister to them. For some who have recently had

operations we pray for them and ask Thy blessing upon them. Wilt Thou restore to health and strength soon. We pray for our country and its leadership and we would particularly remember the preaching of the word of God today, not only in our land but to the uttermost parts of our earth. We know that Thou art in this age building up the church the body of Jesus Christ. Thou art bringing men into the family of God. Thou art edifying the saints, and Thou art moving us all toward the glorious consummation of the appearing of our great God and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, and so Lord we pray as the apostles have prayed, even so come quickly Lord Jesus. Today we commit this meeting to Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon it. Bless the ministry of the word at Pine Cove as well. May there be fruit there. We thank Thee for all that Thou art and a desire to honor and glorify Thee. Strengthen us to that end, and motivate us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today is “God’s School: Matriculation and Graduation.” By the way, for those of you who wonder why I start out like that? I do that for the benefit of the tape room. They write down the title, and then they know what I am speaking on. Otherwise they might not know. They get through what in the world did he speak about this morning? Oh, that’s it, right there. “God’s School: Matriculation and Graduation.” The passage that we are looking at this morning in Titus chapter 2 verses 11-15 had to do with two epiphanies, and if we were entitling it, we might entitle it The Two Epiphanies, the epiphany of grace and the epiphany of glory for the two comings of Jesus Christ are set forth here under that particular figure, the figure of an appearance. Verse 11, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” Verse 13, “Looking for that blessed hope and that glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” If you had come from a church background that was somewhat liturgical, you would know what epiphany is from the time that you were a child. It is a church festival held around January the sixth each year commemorating the revealing of

Jesus as the Christ to the gentiles, in the persons of the Magi Bethlehem, and so epiphany, epiphany means appearance and we could call this passage the Two Appearings. But in the midst of these two epiphanies, there is a divine school opened for the 12th verse says, “Teaching us that.”

Now, the principle of this school, which God has opened for the saints, has a name whose name is Grace, and that surely is a strange name for a principle. I heard of a man, who visited a school where the mascot was a beloved hound dog, and he was somewhat surprised to hear all of the young people refereeing to the dog as principal, and so he asked one of the young people, “Why do you call your mascot principal in the school?” “Well, sir,” the student explained. “He just weaves in and out of the rooms all day long.” You may not understand, which I understand since you are in modern schools, what that means, but I can still remember in my smaller schools that I attended, that the principal did move in and out among the rooms, but to have a principal whose name is Grace that surely is a strange name.

Now, this school is stranger still, for it is a school of one book, the Scriptures. It is a school of one teacher, a Holy Spirit who ministers the things of the grace of God to us. It is a school of one subject for the truth as it is in Jesus Christ is the subject of this school. And furthermore it is a wonderful school in which there are not tuition fees. There are prizes to be won and there are times of discipline. Strangest of all one begins at the highest grades and proceeds to the lowest for the aim of the discipline of the grace of God is to bring us, as Christians, to humility. And so the texts of Scripture all contribute to that aim and end, so that we come to learn to humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God that he may exalt us in due season. But in this school we learn the lessons of life. We learn its responsibilities. Paul has been speaking about them in the earlier part of the chapter, and now we are going to look at the redemptive foundation of these responsibilities. For you see in Christianity we are not simply exhorted to do good works. That really would do us no good, because no one really can do good works. We may

fake them, but we really cannot do them. For we need a power that no man has naturally. And so in Christianity, not only are we exhorted ethically, but we are pointed to the source of power, and that source of power is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, by which we are forgiven and by which we are empowered to fulfill the responsibilities that are set forth in the word.

Now, let’s look at this foundation. This is one of the beautiful little sections of Paul’s letters. It marks out his teaching as different from any other kind of ethical teaching. For it is I say rooted in redemption. This is really the basic difference between all other systems of ethics and Christianity. For other systems of ethics do not supply us with the power to perform them. Christianity promises not only the ethics, but gives us the power to produce the good works that glorify God. He says, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” This is the epiphany of grace. It is an even that has occurred in the past. It is beautifully enshrined in our gospels so far as the description of it is concerned.

Now, the reference to Savior in verse 10 apparently led Paul into this. He said to the servants that they were to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things, and thinking of that word Savior, he launched into the grace of God that brings a Savior. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” And so he is going to root the Christian pattern of behavior in redemption.

Now, that’s what meant by that for then the salvation that follows. The grace of God, if one were looking for an expression to characterize the theology of the Apostle Paul, this would surely be a contender for an apt summary of all that he taught, the grace of God. In fact some have suggested that this is the key word of Paul’s theology, the grace of God. To the Greeks, the word grace referred to a favor that was freely done without hope of return, but in Christianity it is deeper in its gracious aspects. For the word grace in Christianity refers to a favor that is freely done without hope of return to an enemy. For the Bible points out that we are enemies of God naturally, every one of us.

We do not love God. We hate God really, but in spite of the fact that we are enemies, God has, in his wonderful grace given us Jesus Christ, as our Savior. And so this is the grace of God. It has come at his cost.

George Herbert, whom some of you may have studied, in literature was a Christian, and consequently his poems and his work of literature has a special appeal to a Christian, has written a stanza which stresses the incarnation of our Lord in a very beautiful way. He says, “Has thou not heard what my Lord Jesus did? Then let me tell the estranged story. The God of power, as he did ride in his majestic robes of glory resolved to light, and so one day, he did descend undressing all the way.” I love that little clause. “Undressing all the way.” For it pictures in a beautiful way what Jesus Christ did when he laid aside his robes of glory and came to be born in the manger in Bethlehem as an infant. We might think as we look at an infant that surely nothing could be more glorious than a simple little baby. Who doesn’t look at an infant and say, and oh and ah over it. As if it’s something wonderful, but when we reflect that our Lord Jesus was the eternal God who dwelt in the eternity past of heaven itself with all of the glory of God, all of the splendor of the nature of God, and then came to be a babe in the manger of Bethlehem clothed in human flesh, it was really undressing all the way. So the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Grace, God’s wonderful free gift, which he offers to men who are his enemies.

Mr. Moody, who was the Billy Graham before Billy Graham, was once conducting a news conference, and he had a number of reports in the room with him, and they were all seated in chairs in front of him, and they were discussing some of the things that Moody preached, and the subject came around to the grace of God, and so he took a glass, which was nearby and a pitcher of water, and he took the glass and said, “Well now watch me.” And he poured a few drops into the glass, and he said, “That’s the way God gives.” And then holding it out over several of the reporters who were on the first row, he took the pitcher and he just emptied it into the glass, and of course it filled the

glass, and then splattered out all over the men, and then he said, “That’s the way God gives.” “That’s the grace of God of that bringeth salvation, which has appeared to all men.”

Spurgeon, in a story that I read just this week from one of his sermons, describes the visit of one of the princess of Spain to a galley in which convicts were chained to their oars and were working. And he wanted to pay them an honor of his visit to set free any of the galley slaves that he chose, and he came in and he went to man after man asking them why they were in the prison. One of them said he was there because false witnesses swore away his character. He went to another one, and he asked him why he was there. And he said, he had done something that was wrong, but it wasn’t very much, and he ought never to have been condemned. The prince said, “Ah.” And he went on. And so he went the round, and every one of the prisoners who were in the galley, made excuses for their sins until finally he came to one man, and he said, “Why are you here?” He said, “You ask me why I am here. I am ashamed to say that I richly deserve it.” He said, “I am guilty. I cannot for a moment say that I am not, and if I die at this oar, I thoroughly deserve the punishment. In fact I think it’s a mercy that my life has spared me.” And the prince stopped, and he said, “It’s a pity that such a bad fellow as you should be placed among such a number of innocent people. I think I shall set you free.” And he did. [Laughter]

Now, it illustrates a very beautiful principle in the word of God, for you see Jesus himself, said he did not come to save the righteous, but to bring sinners to repentance, and when a man poses as one who is righteous in himself, he is not a candidate for the grace of God. For the grace of God is designed for sinners.

Now, notice he says that the grace of God that bringeth salvation. He does not say, for the grace of God that brings social welfare. He does not say for the grace of God that brings compassion. He does not say the grace of God that brings us an example of holy living. He says the grace of God brings salvation. And it would seem to me in the

light of this that what he is speaking about, when he says the grace of God that bringeth salvation, is the whole work of Jesus Christ and his saving work. We are not simply to think about his incarnation. We are not even to think simply about his crucifixion, but we are to think about the whole program of the grace of God, which begins with the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It proceeds through his temptation, his baptism, his temptation, his agony in Gethsemane, his work in the cross, his burial, and his resurrection, his ascension to the right hand of the Father, the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit and all of the ministries that the Holy Spirit has to us. The ministry of regeneration, the ministry of baptizing us into the body of Christ, making us part of the true church, his ministry of permanent indwelling, so that he may guide us and teach us, his ministry of giving us spiritual gifts, his ministry of sanctification us, which the Holy Spirit is engaging in the case of every Christian.

He is causing you to grow constantly. He is nurturing within you the dispositions that he implanted there by regeneration, so that ultimately when Jesus Christ comes again, and that is part of the grace of God. When he comes again you will be like him for you will see him as he is, and you shall have a resurrection body, and you shall be able to enjoy the presence of the Lord and serve him throughout all eternity. That is all involved in the grace of God that bringeth salvation. So it is an incredible work really that God has done through Jesus Christ. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation. And it has appeared to all men.” It seems to me that what Paul means here is that all classes of men are eligible for the reception of the grace of God. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to or for all classes of men.”

Now, you see he has just spoken in the preceding context about the aged men. They are included. He has spoken about the aged women, if there are such things as aged women. They too are included. He has spoken about the younger women who are to be taught by the aged women. He has spoken about the younger men and lest anyone should have any question about slaves, they too are the objects of the saving work of

Jesus Christ so far as invitation is concerned, and so "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all classes of men." Whether old, whether male, whether female, whether bond or free all are eligible for the reception of the grace of God.

Now that’s the epiphany of grace. It’s a remarkably succinct summary of God’s work of salvation, but he doesn’t stop there, and this is the thing that really I want to stress this morning, for he says, in verse 12 that this grace that has appeared also educates us. And so if in verse 11, we have the epiphany of grace, here we have the education of grace. For we read, “Teaching us.”

Now, it is the grace that teaches. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all classes of men teaching." So grace is our teacher. Grace is our instructor. Grace is our principle, teaching. Now, there are different types of words that could be translated “teaching”. One that is constantly used in the Bible is a word that means to instruct, and when that word is used you would think of a man who is delivering a lecture, something like that, which I am doing right now, that kind of teaching. But we may also teach in other ways. We may teach by experience.

Now, this word means to train. It often means to train by discipline. It sometimes has the force of chastisement, but it’s a training that results from discipline, and so here the training is the training that God does in his grace through discipline sometimes without discipline, but it is a training. Now this education is then an education that touches our experience. And by the way, let me point this. That when we say that the grace of God trains us and teaches us in experience we are pointing out that God ministers to us often in chastisement as well.

Now, Christians once they have come to faith in Jesus Christ are not punished from that time on, because you see our punishment is taken by Jesus Christ on the cross. The penalty of our sin is gone. Now, Christians are not punished, but Christians are chastised. Christians are disciplines. There is a great deal of difference between the rod of

an executioner, and the rod of a heavenly father, and the kind of rod that we have is the rod of a heavenly Father.

Now, we could imagine a child that appeared before a judge who happened to be his father, accused of some petty crime. He may be acquitted by the judge, but he also may have some attitudes that need discipline and chastisement. And so the father, may acquit the son on the basis of the evidence, but realizing that his heart is really not right, may have to do something to him when he gets him home.

Now Mr. Spurgeon says, “Let God smite me if I sin against him, yet it is not because of the guilt of sin. There is no punishment in it whatever. The penal clause is done away with. It is only that he may cure me of my fault that he may fetch the folly out of my heart.” Isn’t that wonderful expression? “That he may fetch the folly out of my heart.”

Now, that is why God has to chastise his Christian sons and daughters. We have lots of folly in our heart, and the only way in which he can do it is by disciplining us. And so we must suffer discipline. I said this morning and I repeat it again that I have been thankful for many years that my father was a disciplinarian.

Now, there were many times when I made inward resolutions that I was not going to be the kind of father, my father had been after he had disciplined me. And I used to say, occasionally utter them in the presence of my mother, hardly ever in the presence of my father, but I would say, “I am not going to be like that when I grow up.” But when I reached maturity I realized that I was very, very fortunate because I had a father who loved me enough to discipline me. I looked at and I said, “That’s not love. He doesn’t love me.” By the way that’s the way Christians often do when God disciplines us in our lives. We say, “Well, God doesn’t love me.” No. That’s the very reason he does love you. He loves you enough to do something about it.

For you see when you covenanted with God to take him as your heavenly Father, you really got a father. And a father who disciplines and he will do that and my father

disciplined me, and you know I can still remember that when he reached eighty years of age, and I came into his, when I would go back to Charleston to visit, and even when he was eighty and I was fifty, I still felt a little sense of awe and fear in his presence. But he was a father who disciplined, and I am grateful. For you see, a man who learns how to take discipline is the man who some day can be the leader of others. And if you are going to learn how to lead, you must first of all learn how to be subjective. And so the grace of God disciplines us because God has great things in store for us in the future. This is just a temporary season while we are here on the earth. All of eternity stretches before us, and he has great things for us in the eternity that is to come. So he will discipline us. We are children, always children as long as we are here. Coming to some form of Christian maturity but still in the overall patten of things, we are just now beginning our life.

Now, if the epiphany of grace refers to the past, and is enshrined in the gospels, for there the appearance of grace of God especially is set forth, the education of grace refers to the present time, and is set forth primarily in the epistles. Now, this grace of God teaches us both negatively and positively. There are some of my friends who are preachers, who occasionally say, “You know it seems to me that all preaching should be first of all positive, and we shouldn’t stay on the negative.” Well that’s true to some extent. I would think that any preaching should have about it the characterization of positiveness. It should be an unfolding the grace of God. And after all that’s the greatest thing in the word of God, that positive manifestation of the grace of God, but often times we are so immature that it is important that God tell us some things that are no, no’s. And so we have the grace of God teaching us first of all negatively and then positively. Teaching us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts.

Now, Paul doesn’t single them out. If he had started to catalogue ungodliness, and worldly lusts, he would never have been able to finish the Book of Titus or any of his epistles. Now, this refers to inordinate sexual desire, for example. Ungodliness and

worldly lusts. It refers to a madness about the spirits, alcohol, too much alcohol, the alcohol drinking that leads to drunkenness in which is such a plague upon our society. It refers to excessive yearning for material things, the kind of Christian who is utterly unhappy because he doesn’t have what some Christian friend has. Maybe you are not able to ride around in a Cadillac. Who wouldn’t want to? I have secret yearnings myself. I would like to have a Cadillac in my garage, a Continental also. [Laughter] I’d like to have several homes, one in the mountains, one on the seashore, one here in Dallas, an apartment in New York City. Who wouldn’t want that? I’d like to attend the plays in New York City. I would like to go to San Francisco. There’s just lots of things that I might like to do, but excessive yearning for the material that’s ungodliness and worldly lusts.

Self-assertiveness, the kind of inward mental attitude sins that Christians find very popular. You know we often attack the outward sins, but the inward sins are very popular among Christians, and we don’t do much about them, quarrelsomeness, vanity the lust to dominate. I think you could sum it all up by saying it’s simply this inordinate desire for pleasure, the inordinate desire for power, the inordinate desire for material possessions. Ungodliness, and worldly lusts, denying them. Christians must deny them in the power of the spirit. Positively Paul says, this grace teaches us that we should live soberly, righteously and Godly in this present age. I would think that these adverbs describe the total of a man’s life, very affectively. Notice, one of them has to do with the inward man, one has to do with the outward man. One has to do with man as under God. Look. Teaching us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lust we should live soberly, that’s inwardly. Sound mindedly, self-control, soberly. By the way that’s not somberly. Many Christians are entirely too somber. You know you look out over an audience, and you say, “My goodness what tragedy has happened?” [Laughter]

Now, I know that Texas law shifts today, and that partially explains the looks on the faces of some of you, but there’ll be another year. [Laughter] But we shouldn’t be somber. Christians should be happy. After all everything in our life is positive. As long

as we are breathing a breath, God has a purpose for us. It’s all good news. So we should live soberly. That’s within. Not somberly, outwardly righteously, in your community in your neighborhood. That of course is the way you should be known. Not everyone will love you and like you. If you are faithful as a Christian, but at least you should make the impression of living righteously and Godly. Well, that’s our attitude towards God, and so inwardly soberly, outwardly righteously, upwardly Godly. The whole law is fulfilled in these injunctions that Paul sets forth so succinctly.

Henry Frost used to say that, “All men need two conversions, the first conversion from the natural the supernatural. He needs to come to understand there is a God through Jesus Christ and he needs to receive the Savior and become born again. He needs to begin to live the supernatural life, the conversion from the natural to the supernatural.” And he used to say, “He then needs a second conversion. He needs a conversion from the supernatural back to the natural.” That is he needs to put into practice in every day living the things that have become his spiritual possessions. It’s what Paul meant when he addressed the saint for example as those who were in Christ but also in Ephesus or in Colossae and also in God.

Now, we have two places of residence. We have a heavenly home, and we have an earthly home. I do have two homes after all. Now, Paul goes on to speak of the epiphany of glory. Now, if the other epiphanies have to do with the past and present, this one has to do with the future. If the other things, the epiphany of grace has to do with the revelation and the gospels, and if the education of grace has to do with instruction, as found in the epistles, well this epiphany of the glory of our Lord has to do with that which is found in the great prophetic sections of the New Testament, and preeminently in the Book of Revelation. “Looking for that blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Now, I want to put two words together to give you my impression of what Paul is saying to us. He says, in verse 12 that we are to live and then describes our life by using

three adverbs, but now he uses a participle that expresses also an attitude. He says that we are to live looking. “Live looking.” How am I to live as a Christian? Well, I am to live looking. Looking for what? “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The Greek text puts this in this way. “We are to live looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” And the glory is the expression of all the attributes of God. And so we are to live with the constant expectation of the appearance of the glory of our Lord Jesus when we shall be able to see him as he really is.

In 1971 in the evangelical church, the glory of the Lord’s return does not grip us quite like it did seventy-five years ago. I have in my notes a number of illustrations, which from time to time I refer to, but they represent something of a pattern. Back when the truth of the Lord’s return was recovered to some extent among Christians, it was not uncommon for parents to train their children in the eminency of the Lord’s return in such a way that they were constantly looking for the return of Jesus Christ. Some years ago I went to Boston, and I was staying in a home. And we were sitting around the breakfast table after breakfast. And we were talking about how we had come to Christ, and my host was explaining to me that he had been brought up in a Christian home, and he said the thing that impressed me more than anything else, was their sense of the eminency of the Lord’s return. And he said, “It was not an uncommon thing for me to wake up in the middle of the night, and not hear a sound and wonder if the rapture of the church had really taken place.” And he said, “I can still remember getting out of my bed, and walking down stairs to the bedroom where father and mother were, and walking in the room and feeling on the bed to be sure that they were still there.” Because he knew he was not a Christian, and he was afraid that they might leave at the rapture.

Now, he was, at that time, a very effective Christian worker in that church in Boston, a businessman, doing the work of the Lord, perhaps because the parents inculcated the sense of the eminency of the Lord’s return. You know this may be the last

morning that we ever have together. For our Lord may come at any time. So we are to live looking. This is the completion of those words of Matthew chapter 1 verse 23, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” And this is the last great act of his work of salvation, to take us to be with him.

Now is as is often the case with Paul and the apostles, when they mention Jesus Christ, I sometimes refer to this as an apostolic disease. They have an apostolic disease. When they mention the name of Jesus Christ, they have to start testifying to us, about the things that our Lord has done, and so he says, “The glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who.” And he launches into an expansion of what he has done. He speaks of the act of sacrifice and the aim of that sacrifice. Who gave himself for us?

Now look at those words, “who gave himself.” Our Lord’s sacrifice is a voluntary sacrifice. He was not required to do what he did. It was voluntary. Now he was required when he came to earth to die, but the covenant that was made in eternity past among the members of the great Trinity by which the Son covenanted what the Godhead to come and carry out the work of salvation. That was a voluntary thing on the Son’s part. It was a voluntary thing on the Fathers’ part, and on the Spirit’s part. And as the Father covenanted to give the Son, and the Spirit covenanted to apply the benefits of the work of the Son, and as the Son covenanted to come, it was all a voluntary undertaking of the great Trinity, and so he gave himself.

Now notice, “He gave himself for us that he might redeem.” He gave himself and expiatory offering. He gave himself as a sacrifice. He shed his blood like the animal sacrifices. It was expiatory. It was for sin. And further it is substitutionary. He gave himself for us. Modern men often question the morality of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. And I must confess that as an evangelical that occasionally this work has been presented in such a way that it does seem as if God was not just in doing what he has done.

If we were saying that by the substitutionary atonement that a judge sentences an innocent person to suffer death in the place of a convicted murderer, if we were saying something like that it would be unjust. But we are not saying something like that. You see in that illustration there are four parties that are involved. There is the person who has committed the crime. There is the judge. There is the person against whom the crime has been committed, and there is the king or the law of the land. And so for the judge to allow an innocent person to suffer for a guilty person would be an immoral thing, assuming there are these four parties to the crime, and it’s punishment. But in the case our Lord, it is something quite different. For you see in the case of our Lord, the persons who is wronged is not separate from the judge and the judge is not separate from the king.

But the person who has done the wrong has done it against the judge and he has done it against the king of the land. And so really there are only two people involved. There is the great lawgiver himself, and when he acts as judge it is he who deals with the person who offended him. And so he is perfectly free. For it is he who makes the laws to accept the sacrifice of our Lord, who is not a third party, but he too is the one who has been wronged. And so the Godhead, which is wronged by our sin, has voluntarily assumed the payment of that sin because the Godhead has the perfect right to do it. It’s not a human thing at all. It’s something entirely different. The substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is eminently moral. For in the ultimate sense it is God who bears the punishment, and it is he who is supreme authority of the universe.

Now the aim of is that we might be redeemed and hat he might purify unto himself a peculiar people. There it is. We have always known Christians were peculiar but here is the Scriptural justification for it, peculiar. Odd people aren’t we? Yes, we are odd. I have often reflected on this. We are odd. It’s startling, but it’s true. You look out and see some of the oddest people among Christians. Well, there is a philosophy back of that, you know. Remember when David was in exile, when he had to leave and abdicate

his throne, he went out and dwelt in the cave of Adullam, there were gathered to him all of the convicts and the sinners and all of the lower class elements of the society of Jerusalem and they gathered themselves to David in the cave of Adullam and became David’s mighty men by association with him. That’s really what God is doing today. He is gathering a lot of strange people together as the people of God. People who have acknowledged their need, and who have come and who are not the work objects of the sanctifying grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is these with whom God identifies himself. We are a peculiar people, but we are going to be different one of these days, and we’re going to have rubbed out of our character a lot of the oddities that are there. But that really isn’t what this passage means, sad to say. Peculiar does not really mean odd.

Now this was term that was used of, for example a mighty warrior who has won a great battle and taken a lot of booty and spoil, and the king or the commander reserved for himself the right to select first among the spoils, the things that especially appeal to him. And so it has to do with the special portion of a conqueror, and that’s peculiar in that sense. Unique possession. And really what it means is that God has done all of this through Jesus Christ that he might purify unto himself a people who belong to him as his own unique possession. Why he is referring to his elect of course, his peculiar people, the ones whom he selects out of all of the booty. That’s what I want right there. Lewis Johnson, I want him. Somebody may say, “Why does he want that?” [Laughter]

Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say, “I am so glad he chose me before he saw me, because if he had waited until he saw me, he might not have wanted me.” And so we are his peculiar people not odd, but people that are over and over a special possession for him. That’s what I am, zealous of good works. May I sum it up? The incarnation, which Paul refers to in verse 11, is a great day, the appearance of the grace of God bringing salvation. Do we have it? Is it really our possession?

I read another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon this past week. It was entitled the treasures of grace, and in it he gives a personal story of a visit that he and a deacon from

his church made to a young girl who was dying. They went by to see her, and she was remarkably pleasant. The deacon and Mr. Spurgeon sat down by her bedside, and began to ask her some questions. They asked some rather pointed ones. I have wondered as I have read this story, is this the kind of question that I ought to ask people by whose bedside I appear when they are dying. The first question they asked was whether she was afraid of dying or not. And she said, “No, the only thing I fear is this. I am afraid of living, lest my patience should wear out. I have not said an impatient word yet sir. I hope that I shall not. It’s sad to be so very weak, but I think that if I had my choice, I would rather be here than to be in health for it is very precious to me. I know that my redeemer liveth and I am waiting for the moment when he shall send his chariot of fire to take me up to him.” Then Mr. Spurgeon put another question to her. He said, “Have you any doubts?” “No, none sir. Why should I? I clasp my arms around the neck of Christ.” “But don’t you have any fear about your sins?” Mr. Spurgeon said. “No sir they are all forgiven. I trust the Savior’s precious blood.” “And do you think that you will be as brave as this when you come actually to die?” “Not if he leaves me sir. But he will never leave me, for he has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

As I have said, so often, when the physicians of this life, can no longer do us any good, there is a great physician who is able to do us infinite good, and if we have this trust deep done in our heart in him which makes us a Christian, then we can face such events as this.

Now the school that he refers to is a great university. It moves and insights it pupil to a labor of love, though the tuition is free. Some, who do not understand the Christianity and it’s doctrine of salvation by grace have from time to time, said, that Christianity really is the kind of doctrine that insights to evil. For it says in effect that what we do has nothing to do with our salvation, so if that is true then why should we not receive the grace of God, and then continue on sinning in order that God may continue on forgiving. So the more sin we do, and the more forgiveness we receive is therefore

glorifying more to God. So Christianity logically would lead to sin so that God may be glorified more and more by the forgiveness of sin.

Now Paul knew objections like that. He said, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” God forbid. Perish the thought. As a matter of fact, there is nothing like the power of free forgiveness to insight to good works. For the moral effects of a free justification are always effects that lead to love of God, we are grateful to Thee. We love because he first loved us. Paul says, “The love of Christ constraineth me. Talk they of morals, oh bleeding lamb the great morality is love of Thee.” And anyone who knows that he has been lost and in sin and under divine penalty and judgment and bound up on the chains of a sin that has made him utterly and slave, and then here’s the word of pardon and the chains are gone, and he’s free and knows this free forgiveness, that man deep down in his heart has come to a love that will constrain him to do that which will please the Savior and there is no force in this universe like the power of love, and there is no love like the love of Savior and the response to it. The advent of course the greatest day of all, when we shall see him, whom we’ve longed to see, and whom we’ve never seen.

There is a true story of a bridegroom, whose name is William Dike. He had been blinded by an accident, when ten years of age. But in spite of his handicap he went to university. He won honors in the university. He won honors in the university in Britain. He also won a beautiful bride, whom he had never seen. Shortly before his marriage, he submitted to an operation, and the climax came on the day of his wedding. And in order to make it as climatic as possible he had the eye doctor, who had performed the operation, stand by his side on his wedding day. And just before his bride was to come down the aisle, the eye doctor cut away the bandages from his eyes, and as she reached the front of the auditorium for the first time, his eyes looked up her. And he looked into her eyes the first time he had ever seen her, and he said, “At last, at last.” That’s an illustration of what it is going be like to see our Lord. We are to live looking, and when

the time comes I am sure we’ll say more than that when we look on the face of our Lord.
“The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Let us live looking.
Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful for the grace of God, which educates us, all of this wonderful truth, which so ministers to us, building us up in the faith. Preparing us for the life that is beyond the grave. And oh Father, may in the mean time this grace so instruct and chastise us that we may truly be a people who belong to Thee, who are zealous of good works. If there should be Lord one who has not come to Christ, may at this moment they turn in repentance and faith receiving the gift of eternal life. May Thy grace and mercy go with us. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.