

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Resurrection and Redemption

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; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour 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. (Titus 2:11–15, KJV 1900)

Often Bible students rush to interpret various Bible terms in ways not supported either by the context of the passage or by essential doctrinal teachings found in Scripture. A leading theme relates to terms in Scripture that appear to be universal, that is inclusive of every individual, all of humanity. In our study passage, Paul first affirms that God's grace brings salvation. He does not write that God's grace offers salvation. He brings it. He saves. Thus, if a person tries to make "all men" in the sentence refer to all of humanity, he cannot avoid the logical conclusion that he in fact believes in universal salvation of all humanity, a conclusion that Scripture clearly does not support. If this doctrine were taught in Scripture, we would find no mention of eternal punishment for the wicked.. If hell existed in this doctrinal view, it would be an empty place. Advocates of this universal view often pride themselves in holding to a literal interpretation of Scripture. They fail to follow their own notion of literal interpretation in this verse. Paul specifically stated that God's grace appears "...to all men." If we choose a literal interpretation, we must exclude all women, an idea that no studious and thinking Bible student would remotely consider.

Contextually, Paul has mentioned old men, old women, young men, young women, and servants as classes of people to be instructed by the gospel regarding their own conduct and their godly charge to teach others. The context of the verse builds to Paul's conclusion in Verse 11. The people whom the gospel is to teach have already been saved by the grace of God. Thus, "all men" does not exclude women. The sense of the term in this context more defines all types or classes of people, not all individuals in the human race.

Teaching us that.... Paul focuses his point with his use of "us." He does not in any way change the identity of those whom God saves by His grace alone. Every person so saved by God's grace is also taught by the same grace that saved them. While Paul contextually affirms the need for gospel preaching and teaching, he emphasizes the point that a prior teaching from God must exist for any gospel preaching to reach or truly instruct a person. God in grace saves His beloved and chosen

vessels of mercy. In the very act of this saving and subsequently through the permanently abiding and indwelling Holy Spirit He also teaches His beloved child, preparing the child for the further teaching that He designed to occur through the gospel. The gospel is not God's instrument for the new birth, but it is indeed His instrument to teach His born-again child the rich truths set forth in the first ten verses of the chapter. The idea that all the elect shall surely hear and believe the gospel, often associated with the idea that the gospel serves as an essential instrument in the new birth, confuses the direct teaching of God's grace with the subsequent teaching of the gospel. All of God's regenerated elect are indeed taught by grace, but they are not all taught by the gospel. John 6:45, "of God" and "of the Father" affirm the same point that Paul makes in our study passage, that God is the teacher, not a gospel preacher. This verse conspicuously omits mention of any form of intermediary or instrument. God is quite capable of teaching His regenerate elect in this way without human aid. He did ordain the gospel to appeal to that prior internal teaching and to further teach and guide His children after regeneration, so the direct teaching of God through grace in no way supplants or replaces the gospel. It rather prepares the way for the gospel. Any effort of gospel teaching prior to the direct teaching of grace will fail.

That not all regenerate elect hear and believe the gospel is affirmed by many passages. One as a simple example; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 addresses this point. Some of God's regenerated children are "Lost." (Psalm 119:176; Jeremiah 50:6) In this passage, the "Lostness" that Paul describes is associated with a blindness of the mind, not a deadness of the soul in sins. Based on the many passages that describe the unregenerate or not-born-again person, that person's problem is far more profound than a blinded mind.

...denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.... Sound Biblical teaching follows the same pattern and teaches the same truth that the Holy Spirit teaches the born-again child of grace. "Well, you have your opinion; I have mine. I can believe whatever I want to believe so long as I am sincere."

How sadly common is this self-centered and wholly relativistic idea in today's broader Christian culture. I suggest that, while Scripture indeed commands sincerity in our faith, it nowhere ever magnifies the individual mind to the position of supreme rule. Nor does Scripture ever suggest that truth is so relativistic that every individual believer is free to choose any idea or belief they wish, so long as they are simply sincere in their beliefs. Quite the opposite, Scripture affirms that God has revealed and established His truth, and that truth alone claims His affirmation. "...let God be true, but every man a liar," (Romans 3:4) reveals the mirror opposite idea of the self-centric and relativistic idea expressed above. If what you or I believe, however sincerely believed, contradicts God's revealed truth, God and His truth is true, and any beliefs that differ from God's revealed truth are wrong.

While few Bible teachers will openly teach that God causes sin (Yes, there are a few), many folks who think of themselves as believers are quick to rationalize their sin or shift the blame for their sin onto other people or the circumstances of their life instead of honestly confessing their sins and repenting. God's grace teaches us to confront and to fully acknowledge the sins in our life. You can't reject ungodliness and worldly lust if you deny that it exists in your life, if you try to shift the blame for it to others, or if you deny that you have practiced it. Grace never plays in fantasy. It teaches us to acknowledge the ungodliness and worldly lust in our lives, and then it teaches us to repent. In this lesson to "deny" these sins is not to pretend that they do not exist. It means that we deny these sins their ambitious design to control our lives.

...we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. God's teaching grace always appears with God's wise counsel. If we focus so wholly on our sin and simply strive to cease from that sin (Yes, good in itself, but not complete and definitely never successful), we shall always fail. Let's suppose for the sake of study that we for the moment effectively shut down our besetting sin. We have created a behavioral vacuum in our life, a vacuum that Satan will quickly work to fill with either that same sin or another one just as destructive to our peace and faith. Simultaneously, the grace of God teaches us both to deny, or cease from practicing the sin and to begin working with all diligence to increase the practice of living according to the three divine filters named in the passage, "soberly, righteously, and godly." Some popular eastern philosophies state that their goal is to empty one's mind through meditation. Scripture teaches the mirror opposite. Scripture teaches us, as we begin to reject sin, including our besetting sins, we are to immediately fill that vacuum with living and practicing a different habit. The empty mind is Satan's favorite playground. He knows how to use it quite effectively by filling the vacuum we leave in our minds with more sin. However, by following the Holy Spirit's teaching, we

simultaneously cease from practicing the sin and actively start practicing the new and godly way of living "...soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Never leave a vacuum in your mind.

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. God's grace continues its teaching. Grace not only teaches us to deny sin and to glorify the Lord by the habit of sober, righteous, and godly conduct, but it also reveals to us the truth of God's future and final salvation of His people from sin's final effect on us, death. Grace teaches us that grace shall in the end "Kill" death itself. Thus, by the marvel of grace, we come to believe in the Lord's glorious return and deliverance of His beloved children from death into eternity with Him.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity. It was not our decision or good works that redeemed us from our sins. It was God's gift (Not a mere offer; a gift bestowed) that redeemed us. Even that besetting sin that causes so much grief in your life, Jesus gave Himself as the full payment to redeem you from it. We shall not fully experience this redemption until the Second Coming and the resurrection of our body, finally eradicating the last stinging impact of sin in our lives.

...and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Notice that this state follows our final and full redemption. However much that besetting sin causes you to shed private tears and to hide your grief over it, God's "Gift" of His darling Son redeems you from that and all other sins in your life. His redemption shall finally claim His "...purchased possession" from all of their sins. (Ephesians 1:14) The sins that darkened your life and hindered your peaceful joy in God your Savior shall not compromise that glorious world to which God's grace in the gift of His Son shall take you in that last and glorious day of all days. God's purifying of His chosen and beloved vessels of mercy did not end with your new birth. It shall end only at that future day when He redeems you from death in the resurrection. From that day forward throughout all eternity, you shall be His "...peculiar people, zealous of good works. You shall enjoy eternity with your God and Savior wholly purified from all sins. You shall be "Peculiarly" His. The "vessel of mercy" shall them be filled with the mercy that began His good work in you now. And you, that chosen and beloved "vessel of mercy," shall be zealous only of good works that glorify your God and Savior for eternity.

All of the Lord's children do not so glorify Him in this world, but they shall do so in His glory to come. In Romans 7, Paul quite clearly describes his personal struggle with sin in his life in the here and now. However, do not overlook that he also finally sees his deliverance in the Lord Jesus and thanks God for that deliverance to come. Scripture often compares God's chosen and redeemed people to a

family. Ephesians 3:15 is only one such passage. In an earthly family, the children in the family are not so programmed as to always and only automatically do what the parents have taught the child. Children sometimes rebel and dishonor their parents and their family. Children obey based on their love and respect for their family. The same principle is taught in Scripture regarding the Lord's family. Your obedience and good works did not occur because you were robotically controlled to obey. You are taught by grace to obey, but not coerced to do so. When you choose to obey, you do so in obedience to grace's teaching, and you are motivated by love for the Lord to do so.

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Worship service each Sunday	10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder	Pastor