

**Sunday July 17<sup>th</sup> 2011 - For the grace of God has appeared.**

Titus 2:11-14

**<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (NSAB)**

Beloved, The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. That includes you! The message of the Gospel is a message of grace. It tells us of God's incredible patience, love and mercy. Acting out of His incredible grace and love, God has given to us His Son – Jesus Christ, who willingly and lovingly sacrificed Himself for us. He did so to pay the awful price of our sin.

The Bible clearly teaches us that ***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*** (Rom.3:23). Without exception, we are all sinners. We have all broken God's commandments and so we are all guilty before Him.

The Bible tells us that ***"The wages of sin is death..."*** (Rom.6:23) Death here refers to eternal death and not just physical death. God created us with a body, soul and spirit. When we die, only the physical part of us dies. The soul and spirit are eternal, they never die. One day, at God's appointed time we will receive a new resurrected spiritual body. Our soul and spirit will reside in this new body. The important question is where will we spend eternity in this resurrected state?

As a result of our sin, we should spend eternity in hell and damnation. That is what we all deserve. There is however a "but". God is love, God is mercy, and so He gives us a different option. He gives us the opportunity to live with Him in Heaven.

We heard that the wages of sin is death. Thankfully that is not the entire verse, it is only the first part. The verse doesn't end with the word death. There is not a full stop after death, there is a comma. The words that follow the comma are extremely good news – ***"but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** Let us now put the whole verse together: ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

Good news! Great news. God's free gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!

God did not and does not want to punish us with eternal hell. That is why He sent His Son Jesus to us. When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary on Good Friday, He died in your place, in my place. He died a substitutionary death. He took our punishment upon Himself and died in our place. The reason, the motivation – love.

***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” (John 3:16-17)***

Thank God that the grace of God has appeared. Had Jesus come to judge us, then we would all stand condemned. We already saw that we have all sinned. We are all sinners. we do not have to go further than the first commandment to see our sin. The first commandment states: ***“You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Exodus 20:3)***. Every single time in our life when we have placed something at a higher priority than God, we have broken this commandment. When we have not sought first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, we have broken this commandment. When our will has exercised priority over God’s will, we have broken this commandment. When other things are more important to us than reading the Bible, praying, going to worship, we have broken this commandment.

Let us be clear of the fact that we are all sinners. When we come to understand this, then we find ourselves in a very good place in our lives. We are at the place where the grace of God can shine upon us.

In his first letter John spells it out for us: ***“<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup> but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” 1. John 1:5-10.***

See, all that we have to do in order to receive God’s gracious gift, is confess our sins. When we do we agree with God and are open to forgiveness.

It is so simple, that many do not do it. So many people falsely believe that they must do something to earn the grace of God. Other’s mistakenly believe that they are not worthy to receive His forgiveness. God loves us and He freely gives salvation. We should respond to His love by loving Him and receiving His gift.

God lovingly and graciously calls us, invites us to Him, but He does not force us against our will. If we reject His grace, He won’t force Himself upon us. John wrote ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive.”*** If we confess, He forgives. The opposite is also true. If we do not confess then we remain unforgiven and under condemnation. The choice is ours. If we choose to reject His grace and mercy, then let us not be surprised when in eternity we are rejected by Him.

On the other hand Jesus reassures us: ***“the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” John 6:37***

Just recently, Dr Michael Youseff related this story in a sermon that he preached. It is a true story about Lord Collington of Dublin. During a time of great economic depression in Ireland, Lord Collington, a Christian man, wanting to show people that God’s Grace is free devised a plan. He had many properties and most of the tenants owed him a lot of money. They were not able to service their debts. Lord Collington sent out a notice to all his tenants that on a certain designated day, anyone who owed him money, could come to his office and have his debt cancelled. The only stipulation was, they must come before 12 noon on that one day. The day came and Lord Collington sat in his office with the door wide open to the public. His tenants began to arrive and congregate in the street outside his office. They spoke to one another, discussing whether he really meant what he said. Interestingly no one went in. Time ticked by. At five minutes to 12.00 a man came running down the street, past the crowd of people and ran into Lord Collington’s office. Catching his breath, he said: “Sir, I am here to have my debt cancelled.” Lord Collington looked up from his desk at the man and said: “Do you really believe that I will cancel your debt?” The man replied: “That is what you promised sir, and I believe that you are a man of your word.” Collington then asked the man: “Do you think that you are worthy to receive my forgiveness? Are you a good and industrious man?” The man replied: “The notice didn’t say anything about that! It just stated that I must come here before 12.00 noon to receive my receipt. Here I am sir!” Lord Collington asked the man: “You truly believe that I will cancel your debt?” “Yes sir!” – the man replied. Lord Collington took his pen and wrote paid in full on the man’s document and signed it and gave it back to him. Just then the town clock struck 12.00 noon. The man ran out on the street, waving his debt notice shouting “I got it, I got it. I’m free!” The people upon hearing this ran to Lord Collington’s office only to find that the door was now closed.

They had missed their chance. Everyone had the same information. Everyone had the same opportunity but only the one who acted upon the information in faith received.

Right now the door to heaven is open. Jesus is waiting. We do not know at what hour the door will close forever. If you have not yet had your sin debt forgiven, then come today, come now, and receive His gift of grace.

If you have already come, then come to Him today in an act of thanksgiving and praise and worship Him. Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.