

# Grace in Three Time Zones

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Published and distributed by  
***Thru the Bible Radio Network***  
P.O. Box 7100  
Pasadena, California 91109-7100  
(800) 65-BIBLE  
[www.ttb.org](http://www.ttb.org)

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***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. (Titus 2:11–13)***

Some of us who have a horse and buggy mental chassis never cease to wonder at the speed of travel in this jet age in which we live. The acceleration of transportation is one of the characteristics and marvels of the twentieth century. One winter I left Love Field in Dallas, Texas, during a cold, blustering norther, with the thermometer hovering down around zero, and in little more than one hour we dropped down here in the salubrious climate of southern California. The reason this distance could be covered in somewhat over an hour was due to the three time zones. You leave Texas in what is called the Central Standard Time zone, you cross over the Mountain Standard Time zone, and you land in California in the Pacific Standard Time zone, so that there is a two-hour differential between there and here. We are told that when our new jets are introduced, which probably will travel at two or three times the speed of sound, you will be able to arrive in Los Angeles two hours before you leave Dallas! It looks as though that will bring to pass the far-out dream of the poet Elizabeth Allen who said:

*Backward, turn backward, O Time in your flight,  
Make me a child again just for to-night!*

If you could just keep on going west and could unwind yourself, eventually you could put yourself back to the time you were a child. That would be indeed the wonder of this age!

There is something else in this wonderful world of wonders that has never ceased to elicit the awe and amazement of men. That, of course, is the grace of God. And the grace of God also functions in three time zones. These three time zones are given in Titus 2:11–13. The first time zone speaks of the past:

***For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. (v. 11)***

The second time zone is for the present, the here and now:

***Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. (v. 12)***

Then there is the third time zone, which reaches into the future:

***Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (v. 13)***

### **The First Time Zone: The Past**

The first time zone of grace refers to a past event: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (v. 11). The first word, the little conjunction “for,” ordinarily is passed over because it does not seem too important. But you will find that Paul employs these little conjunctions and connectives like cement used in holding building blocks together. This

word “for” is an atomic word. It is a little word with a big idea behind it. God always swings the door on a little hinge, and that is what you have here. This word goes back and gathers up everything that has preceded it.

What has preceded it? Well, when you read the first chapter of Titus and the second chapter up to this point, you find that all Paul has been doing is giving good advice to a young preacher by the name of Titus. He has been giving him instructions; he has been telling him how to live the Christian life. In fact he has been taking up all degrees of Christians, all classes, every strata of the society of the saints—the young, the old, the married, the single, the widows—and has told them how they are to live. All of this has been good advice up to the word for.”

Actually the good advice is not the gospel. Dr. Dodd, formerly the great Baptist preacher in Shreveport, Louisiana, made the statement, “My pulpit is the place for good news, my study is the place for good advice.” Unfortunately many preachers reverse this order and think that the pulpit is the place for good advice. It is not. The gospel is not good advice, it is good news. But wait just a minute. The gospel is more than good news. Paul says:

***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. for it is [not good news; it is] the power of God unto salvation.*** (Romans 1:16)

The gospel is *power*. My friend, good advice is not worth the snap of the fingers unless there is power to see it through. Unless you are able to carry it out, unless there is dynamic to be furnished with the ethic, it is of no value whatsoever. So Paul here is enjoining this young man Titus, as he is ministering at this time to the Cretians, to demand of them that they live lives that adorn the gospel of God because it is the power of God. Now notice this amazing verse:

***One of themselves [that is, one of the Cretians], even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.*** (Titus 1:12)

I do not know what a slow belly is (some have translated it lazy gluttons), but whatever it is, I would not want to be one! Paul says this is the natural bent of the Cretians, and he moves on to add this:

***Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*** (Titus 2:10)

He is saying that these people who have such an unsavory background, who by nature are almost like animals, now since they have been redeemed by the grace of God and since the gospel has power in it, they are to adorn the gospel of grace. Let me insert this statement: There is no excuse for any Christian to live a life of defeat and failure, absolutely none. We have accepted failure and defeat as being the norm of Christian living. God never intended it to be that way. There is power in the gospel of grace.

Now after Paul has given instruction and advice to this young preacher, he comes to his subject:

***The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared.*** (Titus 2:11; I have changed the translation a little to better conform to the original.)

Notice the language here. It does not say grace hath appeared to all men; the modifier goes back to “salvation.” It brings salvation to all men. The salvation is for all men, including Creteans, of every class and condition. It is a gospel that is global; it is a cosmic gospel; it is for every man, woman, and child, irrespective of class, irrespective of race, irrespective of nation, irrespective of circumstances. The gospel is for all. (By the way, this is the only global message the world ever had until Communism came along. And there are those who believe that if the gospel had not been discredited in Europe, Communism would never have gotten a toehold. But Europe, though grounded in the Bible even as Germany was in the past, came to the place of repudiating the Word of God, which threw open the door for another worldwide philosophy that has swept throughout the world.) Christianity offers a gospel that is for all men.

***The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men, it hath appeared.*** (Titus 2:11)

The word “appear” is, in the Greek, *epiphaino*. The coming of Christ into the world is called an epiphany, that is, a shining forth. Paul is saying that the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men has appeared; it has shown forth into the world. For 1900 years it has been shining forth; and though there are still many dark corners, it is intended for every creature.

We are introduced here to another great word, it is the great word of the gospel—*grace*. Someone says, “Oh, yes, grace means unmerited favor.” Right. But I also want to add that you cannot fathom the meaning of this word. We are told that God saves us by grace—“By grace are ye saved through faith.” I want you to follow me very carefully now. We are not saved by the *love* of God, we are not saved by the *mercy* of God, we are saved by the *grace* of God. Notice how Paul brought together all three of these great words in the Ephesian epistle:

***But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).***  
(Ephesians 2:4, 5)

Notice that he does not say that we are saved by the love of God; he does not say that we are saved by the mercy of God. Mercy is the compassion of God that prompted Him to send the Savior to men, but mercy, even with God, is handcuffed. You can go into a hospital and see a loved one lying there sick. Your heart goes out in compassion and mercy to that loved one, but you cannot help him. Someone may come to you with a tragic story, and you can shed tears for him but still not be able to help him. You see, mercy must be able to act; it has to be more than compassion if it is to be of any value whatsoever. If today God, by being big-hearted and merciful, could save one sinner, He could save all men. If He could save men by mercy, it was unnecessary for Christ to die. We would circumvent the cross, and all we would have in the sky would be a big-hearted old man. I do not mean to be irreverent, because He is not that kind of God. God is merciful, but He is more than that.

Then, my friend, love is the divine motive for God—“God so loved the world”—but He cannot save by love. He saves by grace: “By grace are ye saved.” God, you see, is not only love. When you say that God is love, you have not said all you can say about God. God is righteous, God is holy, God is just. There are holy demands of a righteous God that must be met; there are just claims; there are righteous standards, and all of these must be satisfied. God cannot move in love without at the same time being righteous and just. Christ, by dying on the cross, met the demands and satisfied the claims of justice of a holy God. Love may long to save, but the

immutable law of justice makes love powerless to do anything until the claims of justice have been satisfied. The reason Christ left heaven's glory was to come down to this earth to meet the just claims of God so that God might become unshackled. Christ paid our penalty so that all the debris might be moved out of the channel and His love might be free to flow. God who so loved the world may now shower that love on sinners because Christ died, and salvation is by grace.

You will recall several years ago that there was a Communist riot in South Korea when many thousands were killed. One young Communist boldly shot down two young men who stood up and declared themselves Christians (they were brothers). The Communists were defeated, and the murderer of these two boys was brought up for trial and sentenced to death. He would have been executed had it not been for the father of the two boys he had killed. The father was a pastor in Korea. He pleaded on behalf of the murderer, saying, "My two sons are dead and are now safe in heaven. But if this young man dies, he will go to hell." The judge was moved, and the young man was acquitted. The pastor soon after adopted him as his own son. This young Communist was marvelously and wonderfully saved, and at this time of writing is training in a Bible institute in Korea.

This is mercy extended without justice being satisfied. However, in this country, to be legal, the law must exact a penalty. Either the guilty man pays it, or someone else must pay it for him. There is a case on record in the South which involved a prominent judge and his delinquent son. The judge's only son had committed a serious crime and was to appear in his father's court. His father did a strange thing. Ordinarily a judge in that circumstance would disqualify himself; he did not. The boy was brought up, the evidence was presented, he was found guilty, and the judge said to him, "Though you are my own son, I shall have to sentence you." He sentenced him to ten years of hard labor in the penitentiary and assessed him a fine. The court was startled, and those who had come in as spectators were absolutely shocked to see the judge do this to his own boy. The boy was dismayed because he had thought he would get off. But after handing down the sentence, this judge left the bench and came around to the prisoner in the box. He said to his son, "Move over. You are going free because I am going to pay the penalty."

This is what God did for you. That is the reason God does not save by some sentimental gesture. When God saves, He does not open the back door of heaven and slip you in under cover of darkness. You come in the front door through the One who is the way, the truth, and the life. Because Christ took your penalty, the demands of justice have been met; and now the love of God, that was restrained because of His righteousness, is expressed. He is now able to save you by *grace*. When we were guilty, Christ paid the penalty.

Grace, furthermore, is not complicated by nor implicated with human effort. When God saves you by His grace, He gets no cooperation from you. He does not ask for any conduct or character on your part. God asks men only to believe Him, to trust Him, to receive Christ, to take His way. I sometimes hear the song, "God's Way Is the Best Way." I like that number. But may I say to you that it is not only the best way, it is the only way. There is no other way to save sinners. God actually is not receiving from man even faith. Have you noticed that?

***For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*** (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

The whole package deal is the gift of God, faith included. There is no merit in faith; you can believe in the wrong thing. And faith is not some sort of leap in the dark, as I have heard a theologian in a seminary say. And it is not, my friend, that Indian rope trick. An Indian fakir

comes out with a coiled up rope. He can do his trick in two ways, I am told. He can let the rope go up gradually until it is extended, or he can say, “Presto, hocus–pocus,” and the rope jumps up and hangs suspended in the air. I have heard of fakirs who say to their helpers, “Saboo, climb up the rope.” And the interesting thing is that he climbs up, then when he comes to the end of the rope, he just keeps climbing out of sight. I saw this Indian rope trick on the stage one time—not the man climbing, but the rope going up. A friend of mine who was working backstage told me that what I did not see was the black thread that was tied to the rope by which it was pulled up. As far as we know, the feat has never actually been done; it is just in the imagination of men. But I want to tell you that there are a great many people in our churches today who are trying to do it. My friend, the rope of faith does not hang in mid–air. Faith has to be anchored up yonder, and that anchor is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You remember that He said to Nathanael, whom He chose to be a disciple:

***Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.... Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*** (John 1:50, 51)

He is the way, He the rope; and faith must be placed in Him to have any value whatsoever, for He alone saves. God saves you by His grace. Oh, to believe that He is that good! I talked to a man in the hospital, and he received Christ. He kept repeating, “I can’t believe God is that good!” But He is. God is that good. And yet multitudes of people have placed their faith in their own good works, thinking that somehow they are climbing the rope that leads to heaven. My friend, you are saved by grace, not by holding onto some little rope that you have made!

It is reported that some of the Eskimos up in the frozen North, in order to get rid of the wolves, take razor–sharp knives and bury them in the ice, then smear seal’s blood over the surface. The wolves come along, smell that blood, and begin to lap it up. As they do so, those sharp knives cut their tongues. But they are intent upon lapping up that blood. As fresh blood pours out, they think they have struck it rich. They will keep lapping it until they drop in their tracks, feeding on their own blood. There are multitudes of people right here who are feeding on their own goodness, their own righteousness, as if that could save them.

My beloved, “by grace are ye saved through faith” and “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared.” It *hath* appeared. John Newton, who was a sinner if ever there was one, said, “I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I want to be; I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.” At this moment the grace of God alone can do this for you.

### **The Second Time Zone: The Present**

We come now to that which is all important for us today and that is the second time zone, the present.

***Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*** (Titus 2:12)

Two words here are important: teaching and live. The grace of God teaches us, and the grace of God teaches us how to live. In this verse God is not speaking to all men. He is speaking only to

those who have come through the first time zone. He is speaking to those who have been saved by His grace. Now as we come into the present where we are today, God says, “I have something more for you. The grace of God will not only save you, the grace of God will teach you—teach you how to live.” And it is the only thing that will. If you have been saved by the grace of God through the merit of Christ, then God has some demands to make upon you. But remember, He is not talking to the world now. Will you hear me carefully? I want to be kind but I want to be very firm. God is not trying to reform the world; He is redeeming men who will accept Christ. God has no good advice to offer unsaved men; the gospel is not an appeal to Christ-rejecting men to do better. I asked a man who came to me if he wanted to accept Christ. He said, “Well, I’ll talk to you later about that. You know, I’m going to try to do better.” I think I shocked him by saying, “You are a liar. You are not going to try to do better because if you are honest you know you have tried before, haven’t you?”

“Yes” he admitted.

“How did you come out?”

“Well, I didn’t do it.”

“Neither will you do it this time. And I have news for you—God is not asking you to do better!” No, He is not. God has not asked the unsaved man to reform. I want to say this: If you have rejected Jesus Christ, if you have never accepted Him as your Savior, and you are trying to work this thing out yourself, you should try to get all you can out of life. The government at this moment is attempting a health education program and is asking you to give up cigarettes. But *God* is not asking this of you. No, He is not. Eat, drink, smoke cigarettes, for tomorrow you’ll die of lung cancer, and they will put you in a flip-top box. Just to reform will not save you, so go ahead, get all you can out of this life, because you are lost. However, God is calling those who are His own, whom He has redeemed by the blood of Christ, to live for Him. He is teaching them to live. The word teach means to train a child, to educate. It is a process. The reason He saved you and left you in this life is that He might train you, that He might develop you.

There are two specifics concerning the teaching of grace that I want to mention.

The first specific is that the standards of grace are immeasurably higher than the standards of the law in the Old Testament. Someone asks, “How could David get by with sin?” My friend, if you read the record right, you will find that he did not get by with it. And if you have been saved by the grace of God, you won’t get by with sin. You have been called to a higher plane than were the men of the Old Testament. The Mosaic Law said, “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Now listen to the law of Jesus:

***A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*** (John 13:34)

He has called you to a much higher plane. Love your neighbor, not as yourself, but as Christ loves him! He repeats this standard:

***This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*** (John 15:12)

Paul was confronted by this new standard. Paul was a Pharisee, proud as a peacock. He kept the Mosaic Law, and he said that he could stand blameless before God. But he was filled with pride—pride of place, pride of race, pride of face, pride of grace. That is the quartet that moves in upon all of us. Pride of place—he said, “I am a man of Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city.”

Pride of race—"I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews." Pride of face—"I am a Pharisee," a religious ruler, probably the most brilliant man of his day. Pride of grace—a cultured gentleman, a Roman citizen, and educated in all of the Greek philosophies. With all of this, he was lost. And when he came to Jesus Christ he found that there was a new standard altogether. He mentions it:

***In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.*** (Philippians 2:3)

These commandments are on a higher plane than was ever presented under the law. It is so high that you may say, "That is a superhuman standard, and I cannot measure up to it." You are right. It is superhuman. God knows you cannot live up to it, and that brings me to this second specific of teaching us to live today.

Not only is the standard superhuman, but He has given supernatural enablement to live for Him. Listen to His provision:

***Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*** (1 Corinthians 2:12)

And to those who were carnal believers:

***What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*** (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20)

Also he points out this to the Galatian Christians:

***This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*** (Galatians 3:2, 3)

And through the beloved apostle John He writes:

***And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*** (1 John 3:24)

God, you see, has provided a supernatural enablement so that His child is not left to his own devices. God has given to him the Holy Spirit whereby he can live for God. He not only has delivered us from the penalty of sin, but He has delivered us from the *power* of sin. No wonder John Newton could say, "I am what I am by the grace of God." God by His grace provides the power to live for Him in the here and now.

### **The Third Time Zone: The Future**

***Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*** (Titus 2:13)



The “blessed hope” is the greatest beatitude for the believer today. Blessed are you if you have this hope, the object of which is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I wonder if you are aware of the pessimism felt by men in high places in our contemporary society. In an issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, James Reston, a very brilliant writer, discloses that there is a greater difference today between what public men say in public and what they say in private than at any time since World War II:

But the private conversations of thoughtful men here in Washington are quite different. For the first time since the war, one begins to hear doubts that mortal men are capable of solving or even controlling the political, social and economic problems life has placed before them.

Also George Bernard Shaw in *Too True to Be Good* penned this pathetic confession:

The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt .... Its counsels which should have established the millennium have led directly to the suicide of Europe. I believed them once .... In their name I helped to destroy the faith of millions of worshipers in the temples of a thousand creeds. And now they look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost *his* faith.

These men are very pessimistic, are they not? And it was Bertrand Russell who predicted calamity before the end of this century:

Unless something unforeseeable occurs, one of three possibilities will have been realized .... 1. The end of human life, perhaps of all life on our planet. 2. A reversion to barbarism after a catastrophic diminution of the population of the globe. 3. A unification of the world under a single government ....

What to Bertrand Russell is something unforeseeable, is to the child of God the blessed hope.

**Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.** (Titus 2:13)

Our hope is anchored in our great God. There are those who say that Paul did not claim the deity of Christ. How much stronger can he make it than to say, “our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”? My beloved, our hope of the future is in Him.

I remember the night I looked out my window at the moon and thought, *Man in the moon, you may have a visitor before morning.* To me it is marvelous that man has made a little gadget that can put him on the moon. But infinitely more marvelous is the certainty of our rendezvous in space with Christ.

***For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to***

*meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)

And if man can plot a course and determine the time he is going to arrive on the moon, certainly we should not doubt that God can take us off this earth to be with Himself.

And He will do it by grace—saved by grace; living in grace; and our hope is one that comes by grace.

*Grace is Love blessing the ill-deserving,  
Mercy helping the needy,  
Power lifting the downtrodden,  
Fullness filling the empty,  
Compassion loving the hopeless,  
Beauty clothing the naked, cleansing the defiled,  
Tenderness melting the hardened,  
And joy gladdening the miserable.  
Grace meets the sin of the sinner and removes it.  
Grace answers for the sinner by dying for him.  
Grace lives to empower the saint and live in him.  
Grace equips the soldier and conquers through him.  
Grace leads the child of God and cheers him.  
Grace employs the servant and for service fits him.  
Grace undertakes for the believer and supplies all his need.  
—Author unknown*

What have you done with the marvelous, infinite, amazing grace of God, my friend? What have you done with it?