Titus 1 - Grace That Makes the Ordinary Radiant

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. It's on? Very good. Yes, please. It's great to see you. It kind of feels like spring is like here, isn't it? Like, yeah, I know, I know, right? I don't want to, what do they call it? I don't want to jinx it like you can, but I have blossom on my trees in the garden.

Yeah, I know, right? So that's early, right? So, but it's just good. It feels good, doesn't it? It feels a bit hopeful. So, great. It was great to see you this morning.
And I love the way Jenny just leads those announcements. Like, I just sat down in the back and just listening. It's great. So, as Jenny said, we're going to start a new sermon series this morning, and we're in the book of Titus. So, if you want to scroll there or flick there or turn there, it's page 1218 in my Bible.
You're welcome. So, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus. All right? And we're only going to actually spend probably the next three weeks in this letter. It's a short letter.
Some of it is kind of not just recapping, but kind of embedding what we've already learned in 1 and 2 Timothy. But it's just a good, there's some good stuff here for us.
[1:32] And so, I'm going to read it to you, then we're going to pray, and then we're going to kind of just talk a little bit about it. And so, Paul is writing to Titus, and he says,

For there are many who are subordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.
They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of them is Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.
This testimony is true. Let's pray together.
Father, we come to your word, and we ask, Lord, that you would just guide us, Lord, help us, walk with us through this. We pray by your spirit. Lord, we want understanding, Lord.
[4:02] We want to know what it says, Lord, but we want it to make a difference tomorrow morning in our lives. And so, we pray, Lord, that your Holy Spirit would just quicken these words to us. And, Lord, may our hearts just be ready to receive what you would like us to receive.

Lord, and we do pray, Lord, if there's anything that I say that's not of you, Lord, I pray that it won't be remembered, Lord, but only things of you would be remembered. And so, Lord, help us in that, we pray.
Lord, we need your help. In Jesus' name. Amen. And so, look, so Titus, this book, falls between 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy chronologically.
And so, the story is that Paul has been in prison in Rome. He has met Festus and Felix and King Agrippa, and he's been under house arrest.
So, this is not the same prison that he was in prison in 2 Timothy or 1 Timothy. This is a different prison. It's more like house arrest. And he's gone up before Festus and Felix, and then he's been sent away.
[5:09] And they concluded, actually, there's nothing that he should be answerable to for. And so, they sent him away. And we believe, although the record is a little bit slim, is that he then went on a fourth missionary journey, or he went traveling, and he took with him Titus.

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He ended up in Crete, and he was like, oh my goodness, Crete, what a mess. Titus, you stay here. Clear up the mess. I'm going traveling.
And Titus was like, thanks very much, Paul. Thank you, friend. And so, that's where we're at. And then Paul, as he's then traveling, he's writing to Titus.
As I was kind of preparing this series, I messaged Zach. And Zach told me, like I told Zach a little bit about what I felt like the Lord was calling us to teach and to go through with this series.
And Zach came back with this story that I'd never heard before. And he's wonderfully created it in these graphics that you can see on the screen, right? And it's not the words.
[6:26] Obviously, it's the thing behind the words or to the right of the words. And that's this, that every year in February, Yosemite National Park in America, there's a moment called Firefall.

Now, look, I didn't know about this. I'd never heard about this. And again, it was Zach who told me about this. But for most of the year, there is a waterfall that flows.
It's called Horsetail Fall. It flows off of a rock formation called El Capitan. And for most of the year, it's just a waterfall.
The water is doing exactly what water does. It's steady. It's faithful. It flows every single day. The water itself or the waterfall itself is beautiful. It cascades down the cliff in a way that people would stop to admire.
But for the most of the year, it's just that. It is just falling water. And then for a brief moment in February, the setting sun hits the waterfall at exactly the right angle.
[7:33] And when it does, that light kind of hits the falling water and the waterfall begins to glow like fire. And that's what you can see on the screen. That's not a filter.

That's not an edit. That's a photograph. That's a photograph. And look, what was already beautiful, what already made people stop their cars and take photos, now becomes breathtaking.
Nothing about the waterfall has changed. What changed was the light hitting the water. And I think, like, as Zach shared that with me, that is a powerful picture of this book, this letter.
Because I think most of us would probably agree that doing the ordinary life is difficult, isn't it?
Just kind of the day-to-day ordinary. And you can think about what ordinary looks like to you. But ordinary is, and I'm probably going to get some groans, unloading the dishwasher or doing the washing up if you don't have a dishwasher.
[8:52] Putting the washing out. Taking, I, like, we had a grand, I don't even know how to say this.

Grandparents sleepover? No. We looked after the grandkids, like, yesterday. And we had to take them to football. Oh, my goodness. Like, because we had girls, we never had to do that.
We never had to stand on the side of a football in the cold, watching them play football. How old is he, Loz? Five, the ball's nearly as big as him, right?
That's ordinary faithfulness, though, when parents go and stand by the side of the football pitch and pretend to enjoy that. It's ordinary faithfulness. It's ordinary faithfulness going up and going to work, isn't it?
It's just ordinary stuff. The ordinary stuff of life. Which actually, taking your kids to go and watch them play football is absolutely beautiful.
[9:52] It's absolutely the right thing to do. But when it's, like, cold and wet and you kind of stand there and you think, what are they getting out of this? It's got to be more than what I'm getting out of this.

It's just faithfulness. It's just ordinary stuff. And sometimes, like, many people are living lives where the river is flowing.
Maybe the waterfall is cascading. But the light of Christ hasn't really fully set in their hearts. So, like, there's lots of activity. There's effort. And there may even be religion.
But the ordinary life isn't enough for them. I was speaking to someone just this week who was expressing their struggles with their marriage.
And how their marriage had become, well, it wasn't their words, but it had become ordinary. They were just kind of going through the motions. And they were seeking something greater, something more spectacular.

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[10:56] And there's a danger for all of us, isn't there? That we look in our lives for something more spectacular. We look for firefalls all the time without Christ.

And this is exactly what the Apostle Paul is dealing with in this book, in this letter. He's writing to this young person named Titus, who he's left on the island of Crete. And whilst Crete might be a lovely tourist destination today, I've never been, but I hear it's amazing.
In the first century, it wasn't exactly the most glamour kind of spot to go to. It was known in the ancient world for its corruption. And in fact, calling someone a Cretan was an insult.
I mean, you're likely to get punched in the face, right? In fact, one of the Greek words for being a liar is kretizo, which comes from that kretin, krito, which means to be a Cretan.
And so you'll notice in our text we already read this morning, in verse 2, it says, God who never lies. The Greek word for one of the Greek words for liar, kretzo.
[12:07] And so Paul is kind of playing. He's saying, look, God who isn't a Cretan. And that meant something to Titus. And so it's this island that Paul left Titus on.

And so this is not a church who has it all together. I'm like, yes. Right?
He's not writing to people who have it all together. And again, I'm like, amen. Okay? He, this is a church that needs help. And what Paul shows Titus is that when grace shows up, when we really understand what grace is and what it means, it doesn't do away with faithfulness.
We still do the faithful, ordinary stuff. But it gives us meaning. It gives that faithfulness, that ordinary life. It gives it meaning. Well, you might want to ask, okay, well, what is grace?
Great question. I know you haven't asked it, but I know you're thinking it. Please say you were thinking it. You were thinking it, right? Okay. Good. So look, the theological answer, obviously, is that, I don't know whether it's obviously, actually, I say that I'd miss.
[13:22] The theological answer is that grace is God's undeserved favor to us in Christ. Okay? So that's all very well.

And now you might go, well, I don't even know what that means. And you'd be right to say that because theology sometimes is inadequate unless we understand what it means on Monday morning, right?
And so if I can give you one word that would help, it would be this word meaning. And I'll say that because, again, most of life is not dramatic.
Unless you have daughters, then all of life is dramatic. Most of life is not dramatic. It's answering emails.
It's creating to-do lists and then checking them off. It's cooking dinner. Driving the kids to school. It's working through ordinary responsibilities.
[14:28] And for most of us, and for most of the year, the waterfall of faithfulness just flows, doesn't it? You know what you have to do tomorrow. It's steady.

It's consistent. It's faithful. But this is important. That grace doesn't usually make your Monday more spectacular. Does it? What grace does is it makes your ordinary radiate with meaning.
It is the why you do things. And so the message of Timothy is simply this. To live your ordinary faithfully.
Why? Because it has meaning. It has meaning beyond what you are doing right then and there. It has meaning beyond the present. Grace reminds you that actually you, of who you are before you do any of that.
Before you write that killer email that sorts all your delegation out for the whole week. I know that never happens.
[15:38] Before you meet those deadlines. Before you start parenting. Before you meet others' expectations. Before you hear that quiet voice in your head that says you need to prove yourself today.

Grace interrupts that. And says you are not starting this day trying to earn God's approval. You're starting this day already loved in Christ.
That's grace. Grace. Grace. And because of Jesus you are not working for acceptance. You're working from acceptance. That brings meaning.

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And so look, the first thing that Paul says in this chapter in verse 1 to 4 is that grace gives us a really clear foundation. It gives us something to stand on.
Grace isn't just something that we say before we eat. It gives us clear foundation. So look what he says. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Christ Jesus, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth which accords to godliness.
[16:44] Would you notice how Paul introduces himself? He calls himself a servant, which is the Greek word which literally means a voluntary slave. And look, again, that helps because remember who Paul is.

He planted churches. He wrote the Bible. Right? He is one of the most influential leaders in Christian history. And yet he introduces himself, Paul, a servant.
And that alone tells us something about grace, doesn't it? That grace does not produce arrogance. Grace produces humility. It creates a servant, a servanthood within us.
Grace reminds us that we have been rescued, that we're not self-made. Grace reminds us that we are forgiven. We're not rewarded.
Now, I know we are rewarded. Like, we'll get that in a minute. Like, but that's not the basis of why we serve. Then Paul says something fascinating.
[17:53] He says that he is a servant of God and an apostle. Servant of God and an apostle. And he says that he is that for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth.

He doesn't say, I'm a servant. But also, you need to remember, I'm an apostle. And then, you know, puff himself up. And, you know, I just want you to know that I'm an apostle. He doesn't say that. He says, I'm an apostle for this reason.
Not for my own sake, but for others' sake. For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. So, Paul says that he's doing it for others.
The sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth. And then he says that this truth leads somewhere. He says that this truth leads or accords with godliness.
Which is important because, look, we live in a moment where people want grace. They like the idea. We all like the idea of grace.
[18:56] Amen? Amen? Good. We don't like transformation, though, do we? We struggle more with that word godliness. People want forgiveness, but they want it without change.

Like, if I could just keep saying sorry a thousand times, or asking for forgiveness a thousand times, that's fine. But what would we say? Well, you need to change.
And actually, we live in a moment where we don't really want change, but we just do like forgiveness. We do like grace. People maybe want Jesus as a savior, but not Jesus as a lord.
But the Bible refuses to separate those things, right? Real grace is going to shape our lives. It's going to change our lives. It may not change our lives perfectly.
Or instantly. We also quite like that as well, wouldn't we? Like to be instantly changed. One day we will be instantly changed, but it's not right now. But we do want it to be genuine.
[20:09] And so, like, when I realize that I don't need to prove myself to get God's seal of approval, I can continue being faithful in the things that God has given me to do.

Like, if grace is producing a humility in me, I'm not going to turn around, and I might do in my flesh, and quite often probably do in my flesh, if you ask my wife.
Like, I've unloaded the dishwasher a thousand times already. I'm done. Like, I don't know. Those giggles are probably because you're like, yeah, I'm probably there as well.
Like, we don't graduate from faithfulness, do we? But there's something in our hearts that says, I want the spectacular. Like, I'm waiting for AI to come up with some kind of thing that does the dishes.
But if I realize that today, I don't have to prove myself to get God's seal of approval, I don't, and whatever God has placed in front of me today, I can just do faithfully.
[21:29] And know that by doing them, my day isn't going to be more spectacular. That I can just rest in what God has for me. And to understand that whatever God has for me is His good design and will for me, I can do the ordinary.

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And this is what he touches on in verse 2. I can do the ordinary knowing that they mean something greater than what they are on their own.
And so verse 2, he says, In hope of eternal life. And look, you've got to read that whole thing where he says, He says, Paul, a servant of God, apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness in hope of eternal life, which God who never lies.
I mean, if you haven't got that underlined in your Bible, what are you doing? Right? That's one good thing to stick on your fridge right there. Okay? Everybody's getting a pen out.
It's like, oh, I feel rebuked. In hope of eternal life, which God who never lies, promised before the ages began.
[22:51] What a powerful verse that is. Because look, if we're honest, ordinary faithfulness can often feel a little bit pointless, can't it? You pray the same prayers every single day.

You keep trying to love the same difficult people every single day. You keep showing up and no one's giving you any applause.
You keep believing promises that you cannot see. And there are days when you wonder, is this really going anywhere? And Paul answers that question with one unshakable truth.
God never lies. Not once. Not ever. Not in the long story of the universe.
Every promise God has ever spoken stands. And it stands on his character that cannot fracture.
Hebrews 6 verse 18 says that it's not that God doesn't lie.
[23:59] It's that God cannot lie. It's impossible for God to lie. It's impossible for God to lie. It's not that he just chooses not to.

Truth, you might say, is woven into his nature. Which means the hope set before us that Paul is talking about here, eternal life, is not wishful thinking.
It's not a motivational idea like to help Christians get through Monday before caffeine. It is a promise spoken by the only being in the universe whose word has never, ever failed.
Not even once. And so it means that the quiet faithfulness of your life and my life is more than you can see. And none of it is wasted.
Because your life is anchored in a promise that predates the world itself. Paul says that it was promised before the ages.
[25:07] That word is eons. You want to know how long an eon is? It's just long. Like it's proper long.

And he's not saying, he's not saying that I gave the promise or God gave the promise in the last age. He's saying, the promise was given before there was a thing called ages.
And so when ordinary faithfulness, waterfall faithfulness feels small, listen, sometimes what we do is this.
What do we do? We inflate either ourselves or we inflate the ordinary faithfulness. And what Paul is saying, no, no, don't do that. Don't inflate yourself.
Don't inflate the problem. Don't inflate the task. Inflate God. Look to see how good and big God is.
And then all of a sudden, everything kind of just like starts to slot into position.
[26:12] The hope of eternal life means there is a day coming when faith, the things that you do by faith that you can't see the outcome of, will become sight. Then he says in verse 3, Because in a world obsessed with novelty and Instagram clips and not clips, what are they called?

Reels, reels, thanks. And personality and platform and a whole bunch of other things.
God's chosen method is still the proclamation of his word. The power isn't in the personality of the preacher.
The power isn't in the stage that they stand on. The power is in the truth of the gospel that they stand on. And so that is our foundation.
Grace gives us a clear foundation. And then he moves in verse 5 to tell us that grace creates healthy leadership. Grace creates healthy leadership.
[27:44] Grace creates healthy leadership. He says, this is why I left you in Crete. And there must have been some question in Titus' mind. This is why he's answering.

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Maybe there's been this conversation. I don't know, but this would be my conversation to myself in my own head. Paul, why did you leave me in Crete? And so Paul says, let me tell you why I left you in Crete.
So that you might put what remained into order. And so we gather, we guess maybe by the phrasing of that word, that what was remained was pretty small.
And he says, you need to put it in order. And appoint elders in every town as I've directed you. Translation, simply this.
Things were messy in Crete. Things were out of order in Crete. Church life was chaotic. Doctrine was drifting. And leadership was unclear. And so Paul tells Titus, fix it.
[28:46] And then he says in verse 6, he gives the, almost the characteristics of those leaders. He says, if anyone is above reproach.

And look, not perfect. If you've got perfect next to that in your Bible, you probably need to rephrase that. It's not perfect. That's not what reproach means.
None of us are perfect. Amen? But the life of a leader should not be defined by scandal. And it should not be defined, you know, by worldly standards.
Paul is saying, look, it should be defined by integrity. And look, I'll say this as well. You know, as, you know, Jen just announced this morning about our leadership development, please do not put your leaders on a pedestal.
One of the deadliest things that we can do is put leaders on a pedestal. We start expecting him to be perfect. And, you know, I look at Joseph's diaper, and I'm like, man, that guy is perfect.
[29:55] Right? Like, and, you know, I just look at him. I look at his fresh haircut, and I'm like, the dude is absolutely pulling it today.

There you go. Because there's a different reality, isn't there? You know, the danger is, of course, is that we expect our leaders to be perfect, spiritually flawless, emotionally unshakable, morally untouchable.
And when your leaders inevitably stumble, and they do, and will, the difficulty is that because of that, then we get disillusioned, frustrated, or bitter.
And that's not how grace works. Leaders are human. As Paul introduced this letter, your leaders are stewards.
They're not saviors. Grace reminds us to respect godly leaders, to follow them, yes, but our hope and our faith and our ultimate security isn't in our leaders, it's anchored in Christ.
[31:15] And so then Paul gives us a familiar list. If you are with us in 1 Timothy, you will recognize this list. It's not dissimilar to what he was writing to Timothy about, which tells us that, you know, it's not contextual.

Just because Timothy was ministering there in Ephesus and Titus was ministering here in Crete, it doesn't mean that there are two sets of different kind of lists of integrity for leaders based on where they live in or the time that they're living in.
There's one. And that means that this list is good for us in Southampton. And so he gives us this list, a familiar list. He says, the husband of one wife or a one woman man is probably more accurate.
And his children, so long as they are children, are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. And he says, for an overseer as God's steward.
Now look, what is interesting, and this is just like a really super quick technical point, is that for an overseer as God's steward, in verse 6, he's talking about elders and verse 7, he's talking about overseers.
[32:23] Did you notice that? Two different Greek words, two different roles in the church. And we often think of them, actually, as being the same person.

Sometimes they are. But here, Paul's understanding is clearly he's addressing two different types of people, two different roles in the church.
He's addressing the elder and he's addressing the overseer. That word overseer, sometimes in other translations, especially in the book of Philippines, is translated bishop.
If you want to know where we get the idea of bishop comes from, it comes from here and it comes from the book of Philippines. And so this idea of an overseer or a bishop, as it's translated

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elsewhere, is a reference, really, to the one leading the church.
It's the overseer or an overseer. And in most Protestant churches, and this kind of clears up some other questions, in most Protestant churches, that's the pastor. That's what we call them.
[33:25] Who acts as the leader among the elders. And so here, there is a set of characteristics that are given to elders and that's again expanded on elsewhere in the New Testament.

And there's also characteristics for the person leading that group of people and they too are God's steward. He's not saying the same thing twice. He's saying the same thing to two different groups of people.
people. And look, again, they are not owners. They are stewards. The church does not belong to them. It belongs to Jesus. And then Paul lists these qualifiers at the end.
He says he must be, he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or grieved again, but instead hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.
And notice something there, like these are not celebrity traits, are they? This is, can I just say, this is ordinary godliness.
[34:33] Like there's absolutely nothing if you're like spectacular about this chapter. And I think that's the point. This is just ordinary.

ordinary. Paul is telling Timothy and he's encouraging us and exhorting us to live your ordinary faithfully. Don't look for the spectacular.
It's great when God shows up and gives us the spectacular, isn't it? But listen, he doesn't do that every day. He doesn't do that every hour, does he? There's a teaching that God is doing in us and with us to carefully and methodically and faithfully see God in the ordinary, not to be removed from the ordinary and chase after the spectacular.
Verse 9, it says, he must hold firm the trustworthy word as taught. Like, can I just be honest? There's not, there's not, I've got to be careful.
I'm just going to say it and get in trouble later. There's nothing spectacular about preaching the word. Like, what I mean is, in and of itself, it's just me having a rant for a good 45 minutes.
[35:56] Isn't it? Do you know what I mean? Like, in and of itself, some bloke standing up the front yelling for 45 minutes, that's nothing spectacular.

But what is spectacular is that we open God's word and we hear from him in that ordinary thing.
And this is what Paul is saying. He's saying, look, if you're going to set in order, Titus, the things that are in that church, you can't go out and get a celebrity preacher.
You can't turn on the lights and put them on the stage. You can't get the latest. I mean, we did great with the boy band this morning, but like, you can't get a boy band and just like come up on, do you know what I mean? Like, Timothy, Titus is being told, it's not that.
And it's not that necessarily in of themselves, those things are terrible ideas. But what do you got to do? You got to be faithful in the ordinary. And he says, so he says, you got to hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught.
Not mix it up. Not chuck in a bit of kind of worldly psychology or whatever in there. You got to hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it.
[37:25] And so the overseer is seen as this primary teacher of sound doctrine in the church as the pattern given. And then in verse 10, to the end of the chapter, Paul kind of camps out on this idea of sound doctrine and holding fast a trustworthy word.

And he's giving instruction then in sound doctrine and rebuking those who contradict it. And he says there in verse 10 that, and to the end of the chapter, he says, look, grace exposes false religion.
For, verse 10, there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers. In other words, not everyone teaching spiritual things is telling the truth.
And you shouldn't rely on me telling you the truth every week. Like one of the things that the Bereans were famous for, weren't they? Where they tested the things to see if they were true.
And so, Paul is saying, look, not everyone teaching spiritual things is telling the truth. Some people use religion for power, don't they? Some people use it for influence. Some people use it for money.
And Paul calls them deceivers.

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[38:39] especially, he says, those of the circumcision party. Now, I don't think I've ever, ever seen those two words put together in the same sentence. Like, ain't no one having a party at circumcision.

But that's clearly not what it means. It means that there was a group of people who were legalists going around the churches at the time.
And you can read the book of James is all about this. The book of, the letter to the church of Galatia is all about this. They were going around and they were basically saying, look, if you want to be a Christian, that's fine. But you've got to become a Jew first.
And so, this is the circumcision party. And he says that in verse 11, they must be silenced. Interesting.
They must be silenced. Like, don't listen to their opinion and come to some kind of compromise in your church. He says to Titus, silence them. Since, this is the reason, they're upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.
[39:50] Why is such a strong word for Titus? Like, in our day and age, you know, our day and age, to be confrontational is really a bad thing, isn't it?

You know, and really to take a strong stance against one thing or another has become a really bad thing. And yet, Paul's instruction is to silence them.
And he said before, didn't he? he says, rebuke them who contradict it. And so, this isn't a word for Titus just to remain quiet.
This isn't a word for Titus not to speak up. This is a word for Titus to be strong, to silence, and to rebuke. And he says, why?
Well, simply because theology is not harmless. It wrecks lives. Bad theology wrecks lives, not just theology in general.
[40:52] Right? And so, that's why he said, look, they're upsetting whole families for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

And one of the Cretans, a poet, verse 12, one of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. And then Paul says, and he's right. He says, he's got a point.
And that's why he quotes him. Therefore, rebuke them sharply. And so, look, you know, we have this tendency in church, and especially in kind of the Protestant modern church, to be what my friend calls, he calls, he calls, he calls, he calls, he calls people evangelical fish.
And he calls, he calls people evangelical fish because he has seen a pattern of behavior where people know the right thing, but they're really just kind of limp.
They're really kind of wet. Right? You know, they don't rebuke stuff. They don't confront stuff. Everything's like, oh, okay. Like, if you want to do this in church, well, okay. You know, and so we have this kind of like, you know, this buffet of this Cosmo lounge of just stuff in church.
[42:21] You've got to have a bit of that and a bit of that and a bit of that. And he goes like, man, it's become a circus. That's when you get leaders who are not like this that Paul is talking about, who are evangelicals.

They just have no backbone. They don't know how to stand up straight theologically. And that tells us, look, that grace, and this is the danger, is that we have thought that grace is somehow passive. Oh, grace, it just, you know, where sin abounds, grace abounds much more. And we kind of use that to kind of go, you know what, I'm not going to address sin. I'm not going to confront false teachers.
I'm going to be quiet on these things. But listen, grace is not passive. If grace was passive, Jesus would never have gone to the cross. Jesus went to the cross.
That's hardly passive. Grace confronts lies because truth heals. He says, the testimony is true, therefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith.
[43:30] that's the idea. It's not to embarrass. It's not, you know, to shame. Paul says, look, you need to rebuke them sharply for this reason, that they may be sound in the faith.

Not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and commands of people who turn away from the truth. And so, false religion and non-religion, look, false religion and non-religion, they do the same thing.

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They replace grace with man-made rules instead of grace. They ask you to perform.
They ask you to get approval. And then he says, look, to the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled unbelieving, nothing is pure.
But both their minds and their consciences are defiled. And I think what, well, you know, the point that Paul is making in this context is that grace cleans the heart before it cleans the behavior.
[44:38] And we go the opposite way, don't we? We have that tendency. Sometimes, this is a challenge in the church because, of course, we want all people to behave, don't we?

We want people to be nice to each other and to be kind to each other. And we want people to do works of service and we want people to do works of faith.
And the trouble is, is that a change in behavior works for a while, doesn't it? You know that. If you've ever tried to do a New Year's resolution, you know it works for a while because if it never worked at all, none of us would be so gullible and trying every year.
And so, it works for a while, just long enough to think that, you know, that's the most important thing, behavior. But behavior without heart change never works in the long run.
You can manage appearances for a while, but eventually the heart leaks out. It says in verse 16 that they profess to know God.
[45:49] They profess to know God, but deny Him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. So they say the right things, but their lives contradict it.

So look, as we, as we, as we close this morning, let me just say that grace doesn't wait for your life to be perfect. Grace shows up on Monday morning.
It shows up in the mess. It shows up in Crete. All right? It shows up in the ordinary. It shows up in your faithfulness. Grace meets the river that's flowing and the waterfall that is cascading and it throws light, the light of Christ on it and suddenly everything has meaning.
everything. And you might feel like your faithfulness is small, like you're just, you're just doing enough.
God bless you because that, that's faithfulness. You might feel unnoticed, but the God who never lies notices you.
[47:02] you might feel like nothing you do really matters, but it does. Every prayer, every act of love, every choice to forgive, every moment you follow Jesus, even when it's hard, is anchored in the God who never lies, who always keeps His promises, who has called you to eternal life before the world began.

And so, as we look forwards to the rest of this letter, here's what I want us to think about and here's what I want us to commit to God again this morning, is to live our ordinary faithfully.
Just to live our ordinary faithfully. Love the hard people. Keep doing that. Do the small things with all of your heart. Hold fast to Christ.
Let Him shine on your life. Let grace illuminate your work. Let grace illuminate your relationships. Let grace illuminate your faith. And when you do, I promise you, you're part of something greater than you can see today.
Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you that you never, never lie. Lord, thank you for the promise. Lord, that even the small things, even the unnoticed things, even the things that seem to go wasted and not wasted.
[48:31] Lord, thank you, Lord, that you have put in front of us exactly what you intend to put in front of us. You've placed us exactly where you have intended to place us. Lord, and we want to say, Lord, we're sorry for the times, Lord, where we have grumbled against your good provision.

Lord, where we have said, like, you know, just keeping going is not enough. Would you protect us, Lord, from the danger, the allure of the spectacular?
And Lord, would you remind us again, Lord, that the things that we do each and every day are heaping up for us just this eternal weight of glory will be?
Lord, we want to thank you, Lord, that before we've come to you in prayer, before we've opened our Bibles, before we've done a good act of service, Lord, before we've thought a good thought, you were previous.

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Thank you that because of the cross, because you've died for us, because you've forgiven us, you have accepted us and adopted us into your family and right now we stand with you completely perfect in you.
[49:58] I know while on this earth in this time we are still working that out, Lord, we thank you, Lord, that you don't look at us the way that we look at us. And so, Lord, we're thankful for the mundane.

Lord, we're thankful for the ordinary. We're thankful for the moments that don't seem to make sense in the moment. Lord, as we understand your grace and where you've placed us and what you're doing with us, Lord, we pray.
Lord, that our waterfall moments, Lord, will become firefall moments. Lord, that we would understand our place and our position in you. Lord, what you're doing with us.
Lord, and would we then have hearts that are just even more desirous to be faithful to you, to keep going, Lord, when we want to give up.
Lord, to have more strength when we're weak. Lord, we want to praise you this morning, Lord, that all of this is above us, but it's not to the exclusion of us.
[50:58] Lord, that you invite us into this great plan of yours that you're doing. Lord, so help us just to keep going. Help us to be faithful each and every day. Lord, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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