

It is a law of life that people become like the gods they worship. *‘Those who make them will be like them and so will all who trust in them.’* (Psalm 135:15-18) *‘The gods we worship write their names on our faces... be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming.’* (R. W. Emerson) This is true for people and cultures. The worship of materialism, sex and power will breed selfish hedonistic arrogance. In the introduction of his letter to the church on Crete, the Apostle Paul uses a slogan - **“God doesn’t lie! (1:2)** - to challenge the gods those island people followed. The Cretans worshipped Zeus, whose mother, myth said, deceived her husband so that Zeus could be the Olympic god. Zeus later deceived his wife Hera (goddess of marriage), concealing his affairs with nymphs and mortals. It’s no surprise then that Cretan men who worshipped a deceitful deity hired themselves out as mercenaries; and Cretan women were notorious for abandoning their families to live immorally. One of their prophets said, **‘Cretans are always liars, evil brutes and lazy gluttons.’** (1:12) The Church on Crete was also being deceived by false teachers...’ (Titus 1:10-11) The antidote to lies is truth. God’s truth is **‘sound’** (1:9; 13; 2:1) - healthy for our soul. So Paul urges Church leaders to teach truth to protect the reputation of the gospel.

2:5 Teach truth: so that God’s word will **‘not be maligned’.** *Reputation of God’s Word*

2:8 Teach truth: **‘so they have nothing bad to say about us.’** *Reputation of our Life*

2:10 Teach truth: **‘make the teaching about our Savior attractive’** *Reputation of Jesus*
Christians worship the true God. Jesus’ followers must live with exemplary goodness.

2:7 *‘set them an example by doing what is good.’* **2:14** *‘do what is good.’* **3:8** *‘devote to doing what is good.’* **3:14** *‘learn to devote themselves to doing what is good.’*

Our ability to be ‘good’ has been short circuited by our sinful nature. *‘Human beings want to be good, but not too good, and not quite all the time.’* (G. Orwell) The question is not only why be good, but how? The foundation and motivation of goodness is grace.

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope -the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” **Titus 2:11-14**

1. Grace is a Person: *‘the God of all grace’* (1 Pet 5:10) When Paul says ‘the grace of God has appeared’ (2:11) this doesn’t mean that grace didn’t exist before. ‘Appeared’ is the word used to describe how, in a terrible storm, the sun and stars were not visible (Acts 27:20) - *but they were still there!* God has always been gracious. Creation is an act of grace. So too God’s covenant with Israel. **‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.**’ (Ex 19:3-4) God’s grace appeared in Jesus for salvation of all kinds of people (2:11) to redeem us

from all wickedness (2:14). Grace reveals our nature. Grace means we have nothing to prove or to hide. **What were we?** *'At one time we were foolish, disobedient, deceived ...enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared he saved us.* (Titus 3:3-5) **What are we?** "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

(1 John 3:1) We deserved condemnation. The God of justice cannot wink at wickedness. We received God's pardon by grace through Jesus who bore the full penalty of our sin which is death. *We are offered salvation* (Titus 2:11) *because Jesus offered himself.*

2. Grace is *painful*. Grace is freely given to us but it came at great cost to God. The cross is God's *'grace...given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.'* (2 Tim 1:9) Jesus' substitutionary death makes it possible for God to act graciously towards us.

3. Grace is *possible*. God's justice fell on his sinless Son Jesus. Out of his underserved loving kindness we are *'justified by his grace.'* (Titus 3:7) God *'declares the justified person not liable for the penalty of sin and they are entitled to all the privileges due to those who have not broken the law.'* (Packer) 'Justified' means no matter who you are or what you've done, **God is not against you for your sin. God is for you against your sin.** *The proper response to God's grace is to pursue grace motivated godliness.*

4. Grace is powerful! 2:12 **"It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."**

As a woman sat smoking in a coffee shop, she pulled out a can of deodorant and sprayed around her head to mask the smell – *only to then continue smoking again.* Like her, we might think that we can mask our sinful tendencies; or that having believed in Jesus it is now all up to us to deal with and overcome our disobedience. The Christian life doesn't begin by grace and then continue by unaided human effort. We can say **No** to sin and **Yes** to self-controlled, upright, godly living by cooperating with the 'Spirit of grace' (Zechariah 12:10; Hebrews 10:29), being filled by him daily. God's grace is activated in us by the Spirit who gives us both the *want to* and *how to* live. **What God demands of us grace gives to us to become like Jesus whom we worship.**

To become like Jesus, as we *'bring every bit of our bodily life into harmony with the new life which God has put in us, He will exhibit in us the virtuous characteristic of Jesus.'* (Chambers) God's grace is his divine power to free us from evil (2 Peter 1:3-4; 3:18)

5. Grace is a promise! The goal of grace is that ***'in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.'*** (Eph 2:7)

As we live in ***'this present age'*** we wait for the Jesus' return - his second appearing. When Jesus returns we will be like him (1 John 3:2-3). All that we become is by grace. With this hope we live now by grace - **grace to heal, grace to help & grace to hope.**

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)