

PROFESSOR GRACE

Scripture Reading: Read Titus 2

What motivates you to live a holy life? Is it your fear of hell and God's judgment? Is it because of a sense of duty, an "ought to" mentality? Is it the expectations you feel from the church or your family? What if you could do whatever you wanted and never get caught, would you indulge yourself and sin?

Did you have to think about that last question for a minute before you gave your answer? If so, then you may need to take a course from Professor Grace. You see, most believers are familiar with God's grace when it comes to salvation. Many can even quote Paul's affirmation in Ephesians 2:8-9 about salvation by grace through faith. Fewer believers, however, are familiar with the idea of grace when it comes to holy living. But, look at what Paul says in verses 11-14 in today's chapter reading: *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 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 glorious appearing 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."*

Notice, it's not fear, or duty or even the church's membership requirements that are the primary sources of encouragement to holy living, it's grace. Grace, God's amazing love and mercy, teaches us to say no to ungodliness and yes to holiness. Because he gave himself up for us to redeem us, our response is loving surrender and obedience (cf. Romans 12:1). It's not forced by law but willingly given in grace. In fact, law won't lead to holy living but to more sin (cf. Romans 7). When law reigns, sin revives and I die. It's only when we walk in grace that sin is not our master.

Sadly, some pastors rely on legalistic rules, guilt and manipulation to keep people in line in the church. This produces the temporary obedience of slaves but fails in the long run to lead to genuinely holy living. Only grace can do that. Interestingly, when a church preaches grace, true biblical grace, it affects people in different and very revealing ways. The wounded get healed. They enter into life, experience hope, and move towards healing and wholeness. The religious, however, get angry. They lose control when legalism and guilt cease. A third group of people will start sinning when the constraints are removed. As long as guilt and fear were keeping them in line, the true nature of their heart could not be revealed. Once grace is proclaimed, though, the condition of their hearts was able to be manifested and their need for Christ was clear.

So, what if you could do whatever you wanted and never get caught, would you indulge yourself and sin? Not a chance after taking a class with Professor Grace!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Reread the questions from the opening paragraph and reflect on why you choose to do what's right (assuming you do 😊). Based on your answer, you may need to enroll in a class taught by Professor Grace. Pray for the Lord to open your eyes to see the fullness of God's grace and love on your behalf.

Take-a-way: *Grace isn't just about entering the kingdom. It's also about holy living once you get there.*