

Titus 2:11–14 — The Grace of God Hath Appeared

Grace as Teacher, Saying No and Yes, Prophesying in Three Passages, and Gifts Given to the Body

Scripture Reading: Titus 2:11–14; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11–12

“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)

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.” (Romans 12:6)

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11–12)

Grace as Divine Teacher: The Structure of Titus 2:11–13

It is not the Lord who is our teacher in Titus 2:11 — it is grace. The grace of God that carries with it salvation for all men has appeared, and it teaches. That grace teaches two things: what to say no to, and how to live. The negative comes first: denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. The positive follows: living soberly, justly, and godly in this present course of things. The rubbish must first be

cleared before the building can go up. Judgment on the old manner of life precedes the establishment of the new.

The three words that describe the positive life have a three-directional thrust. Soberly is about oneself: the ordered, self-governed inner life. Justly or righteously is horizontal: all relationships, dealings, contracts, obligations toward others. Godly or piously is vertical: the orientation of the whole life toward God. Together these three leave nothing out. Peter writes that we have all things that pertain to life and godliness in Christ Jesus — and these three spheres touched upon here encompass all of it.

The framework is completed by the object placed before us: awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Grace teaches us what to say no to, how to live, and what to wait for. The waiting is not passive — it is the orientation of the soul toward him who is coming, which gives character to the whole life between now and then.

Prophesying: Gift, Function, and What It Requires

Prophesying in its New Testament sense is not merely prediction but being appointed a mouthpiece — speaking for another, bringing the word of God to bear on the state of an individual or an assembly. The revelatory character of the early apostles and prophets has passed; the canon of Scripture is complete. But that does not mean prophesying has ended. It is a mistake to conclude that because the apostles and the prophets of the foundation period are gone, therefore the gift of prophesying is gone. What has passed is the authoritative, revelation-bearing aspect; what remains is the function of bringing God's mind to bear on the condition of his people. First Corinthians 13 says that prophecy will not cease until that which is perfect has come — it does not “peter out” like tongues, which are said to cease. It continues alongside the gift of knowledge until the Lord comes.

Titus 2 itself has a bearing on what prophesying involves: saying no to what is wrong, pointing toward the blessed hope, calling to a life of sobriety and righteousness and godliness. Whether of an individual or the assembly, the bringing of God's word to bear on the state is the work of prophesying. It tends to be disliked. The Lord said no prophet is without honour except in his own country — in the very place where he ministers the mind of God, because he brings things that are not comfortable to hear. The assemblies of God need to guard themselves against a quiet resistance to this gift, an unwillingness to hear the no that grace teaches, and to listen when the Lord has something to say.

Three Passages, Three Persons of the Godhead

Prophesying and the gifts appear in three places: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. And these three passages look at the gifts in relation to each of the three persons of the Godhead. In 1 Corinthians 12, the manifestations are of the Spirit — given to every man to profit with. In Romans 12, they are services to God, likely God the Father in view — carried out with the solemn consciousness of serving God and with responsibility to him. In Ephesians 4, they are gifts from Christ the head in heaven — he gave these persons to the body.

The distinction in Ephesians 4 is that it is not gifts as such but persons who are given: *domata*, not *charismata*. Christ gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. He gave them to the body with a purpose: for the perfecting of the saints with a view to the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. The ministry in view is not the ministry of those five persons alone but the ministry of every member of the body — every joint of supply — stirred up into activity by these given persons, so that the whole body builds itself up in love. The human idea of ministry concentrates all functions in one man; the divine idea here is that these five are given to activate the ministry of all the saints.

Prophesying According to the Proportion of Faith

Romans 12:6 says: if prophecy, according to the proportion of faith. This is a caution. The story of Micaiah illustrates it well. When Ahab and Jehoshaphat were preparing to go up to Ramoth Gilead, Micaiah alone among all the prophets was not telling them what they wanted to hear. He had faith to prophesy what God said — faith to go to prison if necessary, faith to speak the truth when it made him unpopular and put him at risk. That is the proportion of faith: not speaking beyond what one walks in oneself, not declaring what one does not appropriate in practice, not prophesying ahead of one's actual faith before God in the matter.

One of the easiest things to do as a Christian is to speak about things one does not walk in. If the word is brought and it is beyond the speaker's own practical walk, that is not according to the proportion of faith. There are divine proportions in Christianity, and the soul is meant to be exercised about them. There is such a thing as ministering ahead of one's measure, and the warning in Romans 12 is meant to produce that exercise. Prophesy according to the proportion of faith: no more, and no less.

Pastors and Teachers: A Distinction Not to Be Collapsed

Ephesians 4:11 lists five gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The Granville Sharp grammatical rule has been applied by some to collapse pastors and teachers into one office — pastor-teacher. Granville Sharp himself, however, applied his rule to the person of Christ and his deity; he never intended it to be applied generally to this verse. The application is questionable, and there remains a real distinction between the pastoral and the teaching gifts, even if both may be found in the same person. J.N. Darby and others of that careful school did not accept the hyphenation here. The shepherd and the teacher do different things: the shepherd cares for the sheep in their practical condition;

the teacher opens the word. Both gifts are needed; collapsing them into one may impoverish the assembly.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared, teaching us to say no, and to live soberly, justly, and godly, looking for that blessed hope.