

Counsel in Light of the Lord's Return

Studies in Titus 2:7-15

In the early part of Titus 2, we saw some admonitions directed toward various age groups. There are instructions for older and younger men and women in the church. Now, in the last half of Titus 2, we are given counsel, especially to preachers, in light of the Lord's return.

The message in Titus 2 is not an outline of future events, but an admonition to live right in light of the Lord's return. God expects His people to be a holy people—a people who are concerned about obedience to the Scriptures, and about respect for other human beings. In the letter to Titus, Paul stresses the importance of good works—not to obtain salvation, but to confirm the fact that by God's grace we have experienced salvation.

1. Preachers Are to Live Right (Titus 2:7-8)

The Apostle Paul, in the letter to Titus, is speaking to a preacher who has oversight of the churches on the island of Crete. He admonishes the younger preacher Titus: *"in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part, may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."*

The word "pattern" (2:7) speaks of "a model" or "a guide" for making things. The preacher must strive to live in such a way that he can, without embarrassment, ask others to follow his example. Titus was to see that his life was filled with good deeds. He was not sent to Crete to merely talk about how believers should live; he was to show people (who chose to follow Christ) how Christians should live.

The phrase "uncorruptness in doctrine" means that his teaching should have no taint of heresy. The content of his message should be the pure unadulterated Word of God. The words "showing gravity and sincerity" mean that the truth should be presented seriously, and with a spirit of reverence. There is no need to start a Bible lesson with a series of jokes. There is a place for laughter, but the hour of communicating the great truths of God is not a time for foolishness and levity. Dealing with the destiny of the human soul is serious business.

The term "sound speech" may refer to the word "doctrine" (in verse 7), and thus may mean that our teaching must be sensible and logical, presented in a simple and understandable way, so that the opponent who wants to argue cannot find anything to justly criticize. On the other hand, the words most likely refer to the preacher's conversation—his day-by-day speech. The adjective *sound* means that our conversation should be healthy, edifying, life-giving, and appropriate.

Those who have a special call to point out for others the way to Heaven will receive “the greater condemnation” if they set a bad example. James 3:1 is a reminder that those who teach and preach the Word of God shall be judged with great strictness. The preacher’s responsibility is great because his words affect the spiritual lives of others. The preacher must be both sound in faith and saintly in character.

The purpose of Titus 2 is to encourage God’s people to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ (verses 12-13). We are to “live right” in light of our Lord’s coming. In verses 7-8, the preacher is to live right.

2. Employees Are to Live Right (Titus 2:9-10)

Most of us need to work in order to earn our livelihood. The counsel given in verses 9-10 applies to all working people who are Christians. The standards for the workplace, as set forth in Scripture, apply to any employer-employee relationship. The term for a worker used in the KJV is “servants” — but more literally the word is “slaves.”

The New Testament era was an age when slavery was quite commonly practiced. Paul was not endorsing slavery, but he was telling slaves who converted to Christianity that they were to be the best slaves possible. Slaves in the Roman Empire were not usually treated as brutally as slaves in early American history. Some slaves were highly educated. Some had a better education than their owners did and they held responsible positions for their masters. On the other hand, a slave was still considered property, and could be punished severely for various kinds of misconduct.

The first and foremost purpose of Christianity is not to change social structures, but to change people. And to the degree that people change, society changes. And so wherever true Christianity has made deep inroads, slavery has been eliminated.

The standards given in verses 9-10 are essential for the Christian in his workplace, no matter what his social standing is. Titus 2:9 says, *“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again.”*

The Christian worker is to be obedient to his master. From morning to evening, and in all aspects of his work, the Christian employee must be submissive to his boss.

Proper submission to authority is essential in a family; children are to be subject to their parents (Ephesians 6:1). Proper submission to authority is essential in government; citizens are to honor and respect their leaders (Romans 13:1-7). Proper submission to authority is essential in the workplace; believing employees are not to participate in strikes and work stoppages.

We are to seek “to please” the employer. In other words, we are to do what we are told, and to do our jobs well. As in all interpersonal relationships, we must of course “obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). If we are in a situation which becomes intolerable, we may need to look for work

elsewhere. If we are assigned a job which is immoral, and we are required to do it, we will need to refuse. If you work in a printing plant, and are required to run copies of pornographic magazines; or, if you work in an industrial factory, and the company begins to manufacture weapons of war; or, if you work in a restaurant, and they start selling beer and wine and tobacco—you may very well need to change your place of employment.

The phrase “not answering again” means that we are to obey our employer (our master) without any back-talk, without contradicting, arguing, or disputing the master’s demands. It is not only important to do what we are asked, but to do it with a proper spirit and attitude—not talking back. In our day of self-esteem and self-elevation, being argumentative is almost a way of life for some people. While we must stand up for things that are right and God-honoring, we must not insist on doing things *our way* merely because we have certain preferences.

Titus 2:10 says, “*not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*” This means that the Christian worker must strive to be conscientiously honest. The word “purloin” speaks of petty thievery. It includes such things as taking postage stamps, tools, and other articles of merchandise. It is dishonest to even fritter away time while on the job.

Theft in connection with one’s employment is a tremendous problem in our society. Even “Santa Claus” was caught stealing merchandise at Levin’s Department Store in Asbury Park, NJ several years ago, and at Marshall Fields in Chicago a few years before that.

By way of contrast, Christian employees are to demonstrate that they are dependable and reliable and efficient. To “show good fidelity” (verse 10a) means that employees will purpose to do satisfactory work, and will not stoop to petty dishonesties. Fidelity speaks of faithfulness, meaning that Christian employees will determine to do faithfully what they are supposed to do.

Answering the following set of questions will help us examine our attitudes toward work:

- Am I consistently on time for work?
- Do I occasionally try to shirk my responsibility?
- Do I over-extend my coffee breaks?
- Do I listen carefully to what I am told to do?
- Do I serve just as well when the boss is not around, as when he is close by and observing?
- Am I willing to occasionally put in some extra time even though it may not increase my pay?
- Am I careful with the use of company equipment?
- Do I use company time to pursue my own personal interests?

Employers everywhere are looking for workers who are efficient and dependable and committed to doing a day's work for a day's pay.

Titus 2:10 concludes by saying that living a consistent Christian life—in the home, at work, and everywhere—is to “adorn the doctrine of God.” Just as a frame can enhance a beautiful picture, so our lives should “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.” Our lives should add luster to the gospel of Christ. Sound, wholesome, consistent living advertises, adorns, and makes attractive the gospel. If we really belong to the Lord, our lives will show it! People will see it! They will notice something that is appealing about the way we live, and about the attitudes we show toward the frustrations of life.

For many Christians, the place where we work is a fertile mission field. Unbelievers have the opportunity to observe us in day-by-day situations. They see whether we are patient or impatient, kind or uncaring, honest or dishonest, clean or vulgar in speech. They see how well we live up to the faith we profess, and the Bible principles which we claim to hold dear. Witnessing for Christ will not be productive if our attitudes and reliability and honesty on the job are questionable.

3. All Believers Are to Live Right (Titus 2:11-14)

Every believing Christian is to live each day as if it were his last day before Jesus comes. The power for living the Christian life comes from Jesus Christ. Because He died, and because He rescued us from the control of sin, and because He promised to come back again and take His people home to Heaven, we have an incentive for living a new kind of life.

Titus 2:11-13 says, *“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.”*

a. There are certain facts in the past that we must believe (verse 11). “Grace” is God’s favor lavished upon us, poured out on our behalf even though we do not deserve it. When we meet the conditions of salvation, God grants us pardon even though we really deserve great punishment. God’s grace appeared when Jesus Christ visited our planet two thousand years ago, and especially when He gave Himself a sacrifice for our sins. The atonement purchased by His death is available to all persons. No one is excluded from the possibility of redemption through faith in Jesus Christ.

By nature, every one of us is under the grip of sin, but God’s grace (God’s favor) reaches us even when we are dead in sin. And in the verses that follow, we learn about the miracle of change which Jesus Christ seeks to work in the human life.

b. There is a kind of life in the present that we must live (verse 12). We learn that God’s plan for our lives is more than just getting saved. God intends that we should grow and mature in the Christian life. The process of sanctification is to continue all through our earthly journey. The same “grace”

that saves us, also teaches us (trains us) in the school of holiness—and there are some “no-no’s” in that school which we must learn!

Negatively—God’s grace “teaches us” to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. The word “ungodliness” speaks of any tendency to live apart from God. An “ungodly” person is not necessarily a wicked and brazen sinner. He is instead one who has no place for God in the ordinary routine of life. Many persons *profess* faith in God, but *live* as if God (as a caring Person) does not exist.

The phrase “worldly lusts” includes a lust for ease, a yearning for material possessions, and a craving for illicit sexual activity. “Worldly lusts” include an undue desire for wealth, power, pleasure, and fame.

By God’s grace we must deny (resist, renounce, say “no” to) the tremendous pull of the world, and to any tendency toward ease, materialism, sexual immorality, and other forms of self-indulgence. It takes effort; it requires self-denial; it means counting ourselves dead to sin in order to live life according to the standards of the Word of God.

Positively—God’s grace teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. “Soberly” means keeping our own minds and passions under control (speaks of self-discipline). “Righteously” means doing that which is right and just in our dealings with others (speaks of fairness). “Godly” means being reverent and obedient to God (speaks of spiritual devotion).

To summarize the last four verses of Titus 2, we could say that verse 11 tells what God did to secure our salvation in the past. Verse 12 describes what we are to do to stay on the right path in the present. Verse 13 speaks of things that are in store for us in the future. God’s grace sought us (verse 11), teaches us (verse 12), and prepares us for Christ’s coming (verse 13).

In Titus 2, Paul does not include many details about Christ’s coming, but the Lord’s coming is a motivating force for holy living. Jesus is coming, and if that is true, then we had better get prepared so that we are ready and watching when He comes.

Verse 14 speaks further about our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He *“gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”* There is a lot of theology compressed into that one verse. Jesus “gave himself for us”—that is, He died instead of us; He died as a Substitute, paying the price for our sins.

Jesus died that human beings might become God’s own unique people. The word “peculiar” does not mean “odd, strange, or out-of-date.” Instead, it speaks of “God’s own special possession.” Just as we once were possessed and enslaved by sin, so now we are possessed by and enslaved to Jesus Christ. Surely we should be “zealous of good works.” We should “have a zest for good deeds.” We are not only to be good persons, but we should have *a burning zeal for doing good!* The Greek word

can easily be translated “a fanatic about doing good.” Verse 15 says that preachers are to continually urge this truth upon believers.

There are two appearances described in the last verses of our chapter: the appearance of grace (verse 11), and the appearance of glory (verse 13). Jesus came the first time to be crucified for our sins (to show the grace of God). Jesus is coming the second time to be crowned as King (to display the glory of God). He came the first time in the frail body of a little child. He is going to come the second time in great power and great glory. He came the first time and stood before Pilate. He is coming the second time and Pilate will stand before Him.

As Christians redeemed by the grace of God, we look forward to the day when He comes again. We think of it (verse 13 says) as “a blessed hope,” because for those who have been redeemed, it will be the time associated with entering our eternal home.

For the unbeliever, it will be a different story. Acts 17:31 says that God will judge the world by Him (by Jesus, the man whom He has appointed), and He has made that fact certain by raising Jesus from the dead. Therefore we urge all who have never done it, to turn from your old ways, receive Jesus as your Savior, and set out to follow Jesus as your Master. The Bible says, “*Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*” (Acts 3:19).

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