

# HOW SHALL WE THEN LIVE?

## Titus 2:11-15

### INTRODUCTION

- A. Do you believe this building is on fire? Do you believe that nuclear missiles are, at this moment, on their way to destroy this city? Do you believe that I am a homicidal maniac about to kill as many of you as I can?
- B. Your actions speak plainly about your beliefs. The fact that you still sit calmly in your seats tells me that either you do not believe these things to be true or you have already started your nap.
- C. Do you believe that once you were dead in your sins, lost from God and without a clue about how to live life? Do you believe that God loves you so that He gave his only Son so you could find forgiveness for your sins and begin a new life? Do you believe that Jesus shows us how to live, and that we should do all that we can to live like Him since He died for us?
- D. The ultimate test of our beliefs about these matters lies not in what we say but in what we do. What is important is not the words we mouth but the life we live. When Jesus said, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ yet do not do the things which I command you,” He understood the tendency of people to profess one thing and practice another.
- E. The real question facing many of us today is, “What difference has my belief in Jesus made in my living? Since I believe all these things about Jesus, how should I be acting day in and day out?” I’m not talking about church-going or hymn-singing or sermon-listening. I’m talking about *ethics*, about the standard you choose to determine what is right and what is wrong, about whether you *act on* what you claim to believe.
- F. As Christians, we daily face the challenge not of saying we believe but letting that profession affect the way we live.

### I. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE IN JESUS’ DAY.

#### A. Religion Divorced from Ethics

- 1. There was plenty of comfortable, non-demanding religion when Jesus came to live among us—religion that expected little of its members, required only a little temple attendance and an occasional sacrifice. Religion in Jesus’ day, for the masses, had become something you put into a corner of your life. But you didn’t let it affect the rest of your living. Religion was divorced from ethics.
- 2. Ask a Greek or Roman or even an ordinary Jew how his faith impacted his life, whether he lived more honestly or purely as a result of his beliefs, and you would get the same blank stare you get when asking that question today. Religion was something you did at the temple, on certain days of the week. Religion was ritual and ceremony and holy words. Religion had little to do with the way people lived at home, at work, and at play.

#### B. Examples:

- 1. Religion *overgrown* by sin: paganism.
  - a. Bacchus—drunken revelries.
  - b. Aphrodite—temple prostitution.
- 2. Religion *overlooking* sin: Judaism
  - a. The Pharisees could take away the house of a widow one moment and offer a lengthy prayer the next. They could tithe seeds and ignore justice. They would keep the outside clean, but inside they were full of filth.
  - b. They had made religion so exacting and irrelevant to the masses, that the ordinary people had conveniently compartmentalized religion to an area far removed from where they lived daily.

- c. It wasn't that Judaism promoted sin. It just didn't have much to say to ordinary people about practical daily living.
- 3. What was needed was a religion to *overcome* sin.
  - a. Jesus came to change not just our beliefs but our lives as well. His religion was never intended to be a Sunday morning occurrence. It is, rather, a fever which infects every moment of our lives.
  - b. The apostles understood this and preached it.
    - i. Peter, James and John insist in their writings that believing is not enough. Faith has to make a difference in how we live.
    - ii. Paul is especially careful to teach that right beliefs have to be followed up with right behaviors.
- 4. Christianity is intended to change us. Not just what we say but what we do. It is not meant to be a nice set of beliefs by which we can define ourselves. Christ offers a clear call to let our transformed minds result in transformed living.

## II. WORDS TO A YOUNG PREACHER.

### A. Titus' Work with Paul.

- 1. Titus is mentioned 12 times in the N.T.
- 2. He did missionary work with Paul. We are especially aware of his work in the city of Corinth.
- 3. He was a trusted and valued co-worker. Paul depended heavily upon him.

### B. His Work on Crete.

- 1. Paul and Titus had done mission work on the island of Crete.
- 2. It was a difficult work because of the Cretans' notorious immorality.
- 3. Paul left Titus on Crete (1:5) to finish the work and appoint elders.

### C. Paul's Purpose in Writing:

- 1. To give Titus instructions about how to minister in Crete.
- 2. He tells him to appoint elders, what different groups in the church need to hear from their preacher, and what his duties as a minister are.

### D. Titus 2:11-3:8

- 1. The crux of the letter.
- 2. So important that Paul covers the same material twice (2:11-15; 3:1-8).

## III. THE MESSAGE OF TITUS.

### A. Remember That Something has Happened to Us.

- 1. The Grace of God has appeared to us.
  - a. Titus 2:11, 14; 3:4-7.
  - b. The light was shining in the darkness.
- 2. Grace did something *to* us.
  - a. 2:11; 3:5—Grace saved us.
  - b. 2:14—Jesus gave himself to redeem us from all wickedness.
- 3. Grace did something *in* us.
  - a. 2:12—Grace is teaching us to live differently.
    - i. We can say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions.
    - ii. We can say "Yes" to self-controlled, upright, and godly living.
  - b. 2:14—Grace is purifying us.

### B. Remember We are Not What We Used to Be.

- 1. What we were:
  - a. 2:12a—Ungodly and given to passions.
  - b. 3:3—Foolish, disobedient, deceiving and enslaved, malicious, envious, hated and hating.

2. What we are becoming:
  - a. 2:12b—Self-controlled, upright, and godly.
  - b. 2:14b—Eager to do good.
  - c. 3:1-2—Submissive, obedient, ready to do good, not slanderers, peaceable, considerate, humble.
  - d. 3:8—devoted to doing good.

**C. Remind People of These Things.**

1. Titus 2:15
  - a. These are the things you should teach.
  - b. Encourage and rebuke with all authority.
  - c. Do not let anyone despise you as you do so.
2. Titus 3:8
  - a. This is a trustworthy saying.
  - b. Stress these things.
  - c. These are excellent and profitable for everyone.
3. Had the Cretans not heard this from Paul? Was this a new message Titus was to begin preaching to them? Had they never heard that Jesus was supposed to make a difference in their living? In fact, they had heard this same message again and again. The problem is they weren't getting it!

**CLOSING:**

- A. There is a celestial tug-of-war going on in Crete for the lives of these new believers. Satan is as interested in the behavior of Christians as God is. He is working to influence the direction Christians choose to go.
- B. Ethics is where the battle for the souls of men is the hottest. Satan doesn't care what we say we believe as long as he can convince Christians to behave the way he wants us to. If Satan can win the battle for behavior, he has truly won.
- C. Many of these Christians had not yet learned that professions of faith are not what Christianity is about. The practice of faith is where Christianity stands or falls.
- D. Many of us today have trouble getting the same point. It is possible, even probable, that Satan will allow us to say anything we please about the content of our beliefs and to espouse great cosmic truths. The question that most concerns him is, "Do we practice what we preach?"
- E. Paul warns Titus that some of his congregation will want to compartmentalize religion to the point that what they do on Sunday morning has little impact on how they behave Saturday night. Many of us will want to do the same thing. This has been the struggle of Christians in every age—making behavior yield to beliefs.
- F. *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12).*
- G. Grace that does not teach us that lesson is not the grace Jesus came to deliver. Let's live in the grace that grants a new lifestyle along with our new life.