

Upright and Godly

“What do you mean I don’t have to come to work on Wednesday?” asked Tarsha. “I’m scheduled to be your nurse for three hours a day, three days a week.”

Tarsha was on her first job as a home health care nurse, and she was ready. The 24-year-old young lady had passed all her tests and had just started at the Care-4-You agency.

“My last nurse couldn’t make it,” explained Ayanna, a 50-year-old with multiple sclerosis. “I can still get around. She would come half of the time, and she and I would split half her check.”

That didn’t sound right to Tarsha. “You don’t need all the hours you’re getting from Medicaid?”

“No. I want to keep my hours,” said Ayanna. “Couldn’t you use the extra time off? You could work another patient during the hours you’re supposed to be covering me, and we could both get a little extra money. What’s the harm in doing that?”

“Ma’am,” said Tarsha, straightening up. “That’s defrauding the government. I’m not going to do that. I’ll be back on Wednesday at my scheduled time. But if you want someone else, you can make a request.”

After her shift, Tarsha headed back to the agency. She wanted to let the manager know about the proposition. She also wanted another patient, if possible.

1. *What was the primary motivation that drove you to receive Christ as your Savior?*

2. *In what ways do you struggle to lead a righteous life in an ungodly modern society?*

3. *As you have matured in your faith, do you find that your desire to lead a life pleasing to God has increased or diminished? In what ways?*

Paul Appointed

Titus 1:1-3, KJV

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.

Titus 1:1-3, NIV

¹Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—²in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.

Paul began his personal letter to his protégé Titus by describing himself as servant and apostle, expressions of humility and authority (vs. 1). Paul first called himself a humble “servant of God.” Jesus made it clear that those who were to lead effectively in His kingdom first had to have a servant’s mindset (Mark 10:43). Paul also called himself an apostle of Christ. As an apostle, Paul was sent by Jesus to build up churches. Paul said that the purpose of his dual roles of servant and apostle were “to further the faith” (vs. 1). Perhaps no one (other than Christ Himself) did more to establish the foundational beliefs of the church than the apostle Paul.

These foundational truths cause a cascade of beautiful results, for an unwavering knowledge of the truth would lead to “godliness” (vs. 1)—which means people who reflect the love and character of Christ. This godliness made the “hope of eternal life” all the more certain for those who put their faith and trust in Jesus (vs. 2).

Paul knew that Jesus was God’s Messiah. Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies that prepared the people of God for His arrival. And Jesus brings eternal life, which God had planned to share “before the beginning of time” (vs. 2).

God’s timing is always perfect. Jesus came “at his appointed season” (vs. 3) during the time of the Roman occupation, creating the perfect storm of conditions for the Lord’s redemptive message of repentance and reconciliation to spread. Paul also saw God’s perfect timing in the launch of his own ministry on Christ’s behalf.

Paul recognized the authority he exercised had been given to him by Jesus. This is what he meant by saying his preaching ministry was “entrusted” to him. Furthermore, Paul described God as “Savior” (vs. 3). Since God had promised to save His people, Jesus did what only God can do. Jesus is “God our Savior.”

4. How did Paul describe himself?

5. What had God entrusted to Paul?

Looking to Hope

Titus 2:11-13, KJV

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:11-13, NIV

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Paul makes it clear to Titus (a Gentile) that the grace of God offers salvation to “all people” (vs. 11). Since the law

of Moses was fulfilled by the atoning work of Jesus, that law was not to be used to exclude anyone from hearing the good news of salvation in Christ.

God's grace has a tangible and visible effect in the life of the believer. Everyone who experiences saving faith is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who in turn empowers them to say "no" to their old ways of living, and to abandon the empty promises of Satan.

In addition to saying "no" to that which is sinful, the Spirit-indwelled believer is also able to embrace self-control, righteous living, and a godly temperament that has a long-lasting effect on all relationships (vs. 12). The words apply to all of us in the "present age," since we also wrestle with sinful natures that beckon to us to disobey God. In the age to come, when all God's people receive glorified bodies, they will no longer have to struggle with internal temptations to sin.

The believer places his or her hope in the "appearing" of Jesus (vs. 13). Every believer ought to long for His return, which will be glorious when it fills heaven and earth with God's presence and leaves no room for darkness.

6. *What does the grace of God enable us to do?*

7. *What is the blessed hope for which all Christians long?*

Encourage and Rebuke

Titus 2:14-15, KJV

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Titus 2:14-15, NIV

¹⁴Who 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.

¹⁵These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

The early church clung to a complex (but *orthodox*) view of Christ and rejected heresies that made Jesus unable to accomplish our salvation. Jesus needed to be fully human to represent us on the Cross and fully divine to have the power to save. Otherwise, how was He raised from the dead, breaking the powers of sin and death?

God says in Isaiah 49:26, "I, the LORD, am your Savior." Paul's makes it abundantly clear that God fulfills this promise through Jesus: He is our "God and Savior" (vs. 13).

Jesus willingly gave Himself up for the redemption of humans—those who, with penitent hearts, trust Him for their salvation. Through our repentance, He can then "purify" by His righteousness, and we are accepted into His kingdom as a people "that are his very own" (vs. 14).

We are given the drive and motivation to accomplish the roles that Jesus has commissioned for us. The Spirit helps us become "eager" to do all the good that can be accomplished when we obey Christ and encourage others to do the same.

In his pastoral role, Titus was to encourage and correct those under this care with "authority" (vs. 15) that had been given to him by Christ. When he saw someone exercising spiritual gifts in a way that built others up and glorified God, he was to encourage that person. Titus was also to stay alert for those who were off track and returning to their pre-conversion ways. Sometimes it might take a strong rebuke in order to get that person's attention.

Titus was not to allow anyone to judge or "despise" him (vs. 15). When divisive people undermine legitimate spiritual authority, the whole body suffers. For this reason, he was not to allow disrespectful words and actions, especially toward him, to be ignored or go unanswered.

8. *What did Jesus' death on the cross accomplish for us?*

9. *What admonitions did Paul give to Titus?*

A Call to Godliness amid Ungodly Influences

Historically, Cretans were entrenched in the influence of Greek mythology, believing that their gods were mortal men and women who reached the status of deity by bestowing gifts and service to mankind. The character of these “gods” was immoral, unethical, and selfish. Cretans emulated that behavior in their daily lives and were known for sexual promiscuity, hedonism, and dishonesty. Paul’s letter to Titus tackled issues that arose from mixing old ideologies the truth of the Gospel. Christianity teaches that Christ is God, who became a man to save His people (Titus 1:3; 2:10). The Christian God is righteous and cannot lie (Titus 1:2). God the Father and God the Son call people to depart from evil to pursue godliness.

It’s easy to draw parallels between the ancient Cretan culture and our modern, secular, humanistic one. We live in a society greatly influenced by media, a mixture of world religions, technology, and more. Sexual promiscuity is culturally accepted, violence is normalized in television and movies, and self-indulgence is glorified. Paul’s admonitions to Titus can be applied to the Christian church today. Amid so much worldly influence, it is important that we lead lives which emulate godliness. We serve a God worth imitating! If we act as those who don’t know God or who have rejected the Word of God, how can we hope to draw others to Christ?

10. *Do you encounter Christians in your everyday life who do not seem to exhibit Christlike behavior? What kinds of behaviors do you see on a regular basis that are ungodly?*

11. *In your Christian walk, what kinds of actions have you had to take to resist worldly influences?*

12. *How does a Christian attain godliness? Is it something we can reach through our own good works? Why or why not?*

Christ-righteousness Comes by Faith

W. Ian Thomas, an evangelist, Christian writer, and founder of the Torchbearers Bible schools, once said, “For godliness is not the consequence of your capacity to imitate God, but the consequence of His capacity to reproduce Himself in you; not self-righteousness, but Christ-righteousness; the righteousness which is by faith.”

► *What is godly in your life? What is ungodly? Go to God in prayer and in faith, asking for His power to help you change what is ungodly into behavior that honors Him.*

KEY VERSES

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, KJV

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. —Titus 2:11-13, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of August 19 through August 25

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Proverbs 3:27-35—Do Good Wherever You Can.
- Tues.** Proverbs 31:1-9—Defend the Poor and Needy.
- Wed.** Ephesians 2:1-10—Saved by God’s Rich Mercy.
- Thurs.** James 2:14-26—Faith without Works Is Dead.
- Fri.** Isaiah 30:18-26—Walk in God’s Way.
- Sat.** Matthew 5:13-20—Shine Your Light Before Others.
- Sun.** Titus 3:3-11—Saved by God’s Mercy.