

OUR GREAT EXPECTATION

Titus 2:13

Intro: The end of one year and the beginning of a new year should always be a time of reflection, especially for those of us who know the Lord. However, we really should not wait for a new year to come along before we think about our lives, what we have been doing, and how we can improve spiritually. We ought to be doing this all of the time. Every time we read the Word, or hear it taught, or are exposed to it in any way, we are actually forced to think about ourselves and the way we are living. Then, hopefully, we will seek by the grace of God to make the changes and improvements which need to be made.

Have you done any thinking along this line recently? What did you read in your Bible this morning that made you realize that you needed to change? What kind of problems have you gotten into recently, or maybe not so recently, that you could have avoided if you had been more careful about the way you are living?

The Bible is really concerned with two things:

- 1) What we need to know.
- 2) How we are expected to live.

We see this all through the Scriptures. It was Francis Shaeffer who made famous that question which we find in Ezekiel 33:10,

Therefore, O thou son of man,
 speak unto the house of Israel;
 Thus ye speak, saying,
 If our transgressions and our sins be upon us,
 and we pine away in them,
how should we then live?

That is the question we all need to ask, and it is the question which is answered all through the Word of God.

In Titus 2:12 we have the words, "we should live." Do you see them? The whole epistle of Paul to Titus has to do with the way the people of God should live. In chapter 2 alone Paul instructed "the aged men" in verse 2. The "aged women" in verse 3, and also the younger women in verses 4 and 5, who were the responsibility of the "older women." In verses 6 through 8, the "young men." And finally, in verses 9 and 10, the "servants."

Then it seems that Paul was addressing all of the people of God, including Titus, when he wrote verses 11 through 14.

If there is one statement in these four verses (11-14) which seems to be the one thing that Paul was emphasizing, it seems

that it would be the text which I have chosen for tonight:
 Looking for that blessed hope,
 and the glorious appearing
 [or, the appearing of the glory]
 of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ
 [or, of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ].

What that means is this: Everything in our lives is to be done in anticipation of the return of our Lord. It is not something that we are to think about occasionally; it is to be in our thoughts all of the time.

A. T. Robertson points out in his commentary on Titus that this word, "Looking for," was used by Luke in Luke 2:25 about Simeon when it says that he was "**waiting for** the consolation of Israel." That is, he was living every day in expectation of the coming of the Messiah. In fact, we read that when he took "the child Jesus" in his arms, he praised the Lord, and then he said,

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
 according to thy word:

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation... (Luke 2:29, 30).
 God had promised him that he would not die until "he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26). After he saw Him, he was ready to die--which means that this was all that Simeon was living for was to see the Lord at His first coming!

This should help us to understand the expression, "Looking for that blessed hope." It means that this is what we are to be living for, to see the Lord's return. Luke 2:38 tells us that there were many others that "looked for" (the same word) "redemption in Jerusalem."

How many of the Lord's people do you think there are today who are "looking for that blessed hope..."? How many of us are "looking" daily for His return? How many of us live for that time, hoping that we will see the Lord any day now? That is the way we are supposed to live. We have Scriptural proof of that. So, going back over the chapter, as the older men, the older women, the young women, the young men, and the servants, sought to live the way the Lord wanted them to live, this was to be their great motivation: THE LORD IS COMING, AND IT MAY BE THAT HE WILL COME TODAY.

In past years people have been quick to criticize Christians who were looking for the coming of the Lord. In fact, the expression arose that such people are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good. However, Paul did not seem to feel that way about it. He expressed here that the people who are heavenly minded are going to be the people who will be of the most earthly good. And all that you have to do to see that is to read the whole context. Paul clearly

indicates that the chief evidence that we are looking for the Lord is that we will be zealously pursuing a godly life. John taught in his first epistle that we should be abiding in Christ, which results in holy living, so that we will not be ashamed before the Lord when He comes. Cf. 1 John 2:28. So let the world scoff at us, and let immature Christians join with them, we have our guidance from the Word of God. The fact is that we cannot look forward too much to the coming of the Lord.

But let me say something else about the Lord's return and the fact that we are to be "looking for that blessed hope..." It would seem from the text that those who seek to be holy in their lives are the very people who are going to be expecting the Lord to come. So it works both ways: when we look for His coming we will want to be holy, and when we want to be holy we will be expecting the Lord much more than we otherwise would.

A "blessed hope" is a happy hope! It should make us happy to think about it. It should make us happy to prepare for it. And how happy we will be when He comes! Anyway, it is a "blessed hope."

Now the question is, How do we get to the place where we are really looking for the coming of the Lord, and looking for it, anticipating it, as a "blessed hope"?

Note that Paul spoke of:

I. OUR TEACHER.

We see this in verses 11 and 12.

"The grace of God" is our teacher, which means that our Teacher is the God of grace. But evidently Paul was telling Titus here that our very salvation teaches us that there ought to be, there must be, a change in our lives as a result of having experience salvation by grace. God did not save us to leave us as we were. He saved us to change us. He saved us to deliver us from sin and from the temptations that surround us living "in this present world," this present age! We are not out to change the world; we are to live to please the Lord so that "in this present world" we may be trophies to the world of the marvelous grace of God. We are not going to win people to the Lord just by pleasing them if pleasing them means displeasing the Lord.

What does the grace of God teach us? The answer is in verse 12. (Read.) There is a negative side, and there is a positive side. You have both here. As bad as this world is,

it is still possible to live lives that are pleasing to God
"in this present world.

But let me say something about this "teaching."

II. THE "TEACHING."

It is not the teaching of the classroom that is meant, or the teaching of the Sunday School class, or of the church service (although these are a part of it). But it includes the teaching that we receive through the experiences of our lives, in our struggles against sin, and in our desires to do what is pleasing to the Lord. The testings and trials of our lives are places where some of the greatest teaching is done. We learn to depend upon the grace of God. We marvel more and more at the grace of God. We are thrown into a seemingly hopeless situation only to find our faithful God redirecting our lives, showing us His faithfulness, and then lifting us up to a higher level of holiness.

But it is also true that as this teaching goes on, we lose our former delight in the things of the Lord, and we begin to long for the coming of the Lord. We start to wait for Him. We wonder if it will be today. We want to be careful about how we are living and what we are doing so that when He comes He will find us watching for Him.

The last verse of this section speaks to us of:

III. GOD'S PURPOSE IN REDEMPTION.

What purpose did God have in redeeming us by His grace, and what was involved in our salvation (v. 11), in our redemption (v. 14)?

Paul loved to speak of our salvation in this way, that our Lord "gave himself for us." Cf. Gal. 1:4; 2:20; 1 Tim. 2:6. He was not forced to do it. He did it voluntarily. He "gave himself." What price could have been higher! And it was all that He might save us, that He might redeem us, and in both words we have the idea of deliverance--deliverance from the penalty of our sin, first of all. Then, deliverance from the power of our sin. And although it is not mentioned here, it is implied: deliverance from sin itself when our Lord appears again and we are made like Him.

He died to redeem us and to purify us, and to make us "a peculiar people"--an unfortunate translation for us today. It does not mean odd (although we might appear that way to the world). But it means unusual, different, a people whom the Lord has claimed to be in a special way His very own!

But what is the last thing that Paul said about God's purpose? That these people whom He has saved and taught how to live, looking for the Savior from heaven, should be "zealous of good works." This does not sound to me as though they would be people of no earthly good.

Who are the best servants of God, the most faithful, the most zealous? They are those people of God who are taught holiness by the grace of God, and who consequently are "looking for that blessed hope..."

Concl: Where do we stand in all of this? Where do you stand? Where do I stand?

What is your greatest desire as far as 1993 is concerned, or even for the last days of 1992 are concerned? Is it that this might be the year when the Lord will come? That is what it ought to be. And in preparing for this, let us seek to live holy lives, lives that will glorify God.

What will be the evidence that we are really making progress spiritually beyond the fact that we are looking for the Lord? It is that we will be zealous in all that we can do to serve the Lord.

There are many passages in Scripture where the Holy Spirit has said it all in a very few words. This is one of them. Let me suggest that you memorize these verses if you do not know them. And then repeat them over and over to yourself, thinking especially of what is involved in "looking for that blessed hope." It does not mean selling what we have, sitting out on some mountain with our hands folded, waiting for the Lord. No, it means living holy lives, and doing faithful service, as we await that which most certainly will happen some day, and that day may be very, very soon. May the Lord keep us expecting Him at any moment.