

THE BLESSED HOPE

Titus 2:11-15

Part 1

Intro: Today, on this first Sunday of 1997, I want to do something that I don't usually do. I am going to speak from the same passage in the evening service that I speak from in the morning service. So today, morning and evening, we will be considering together Titus 2:11-15.

It should not be that those of us who are believers in Christ should wait until the first of the year to make changes in our lives which we know need to be made, but neither should we ignore this time each year when it is customary for most people to make "new year's resolutions." We know that most resolutions don't last very long into the new year, but it should be different for those of us who know the Lord. Our desire should always be to please the Lord, but the resources for doing what we set out to do are not in ourselves. Only the Lord can enable us to do what we know He wants us to do. And we have Scripture to encourage us in this.

For example, in Paul's letter to the Philippian church, he had this to say in chapter 2, verses 12 and 13:

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

God has done a work "in" each one of us who knows the Lord, and we are to manifest outwardly what He has done in our hearts. But Paul made it very clear that in living the Christian life, it is God Who *gives us the will* to please God, and it is God Who enables us, Who empowers us, *to do His will*. So where we would fail if we only had our own personal resources to depend upon, we can expect success because God is our Helper, and He will enable us to do what we could never do in our own wisdom or strength.

Let me give you two more verses which are found in Hebrews 13, verses 20 and 21. Sometimes I give this reference when I sign my name in a book, or at the end of a letter. Listen as I read them to you:

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will,

working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight,
through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

Notice that part of verse 21 which says, “working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight.” Who is working? “The God of peace.” Where is He working? “In you” and *in me -- in us!* How is He working? “Through Jesus Christ.” What is He doing? He is perfecting us “to do His will.” Where do we find God’s will? We find it in this book, the Bible.

You see, living the Christian life is too difficult for any of us to live. That is why we so often fail. We set out to do certain things which we are told to do in the Word, but then it isn’t very long before we experience failure. Why is that? It is because we are seeking to do it in our own strength instead of trusting the Lord to help us. The Lord Jesus was talking about living the life that He wants us to live when He said in John 15:5, “Without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

It takes most of us a long time to learn this simple lesson, and then we never really learn it perfectly. We are always falling back on our own wisdom, or our own strength. And that always means failure. On the other hand, I am sure that all of us who have known the Lord for any time at all, could tell how the Lord has helped us to overcome temptations, has blessed us in preparing to teach, and then in teaching, how He has used us to be an instrument of blessing in other people’s lives, and so on and on.

I am sure that we all can honestly say that we can never read our Bibles without reading something that is convicting to us. Either it is something that we have done, which we realize we should not have done, or it is something that we have not been doing which we should have been doing. And so daily we can see the need we have to be more dependent upon the Lord to keep us from sinning against Him as well as to be walking in paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake.

Today I want to call your attention to three words found at the beginning of verse 13 in Titus 2: “That Blessed Hope.” And then I want us to see what we are to do about it. And you be the judge as to whether or not this is one place where your life needs to be changed in the days ahead--not just for 1997, but for the rest of your life.

Then tonight I want to take this same passage to examine how we should be living each day if we are truly “looking for that blessed hope.” And I hope that our consideration of this passage will help us all to be more

pleasing to the Lord in the days ahead than we have been in the past.

So, first of all, let me ask the question,

I. WHAT IS A “HOPE” IN SCRIPTURE?

Here I just want us to get acquainted with these words as they are used in Scripture. Let us look, first, at the word “hope.”

This is a word which all of us have used many, many times. It is a word which we used to express what we desire for the future. It is very possible that when we heard the weather reports yesterday after all of the freezing rain we have had the past week, that most of us said, “I hope it won’t snow.” Or, “I hope that we are not going to get more freezing rain.” I will have to confess that that is the way I felt in my heart, and I expressed it to several people I was talking with yesterday. What I meant was that it was my desire that we would not get snow or more freezing rain, but at the same time I had no assurance that I would see my desire fulfilled. God controls the weather, and we take what He gives. He may be merciful to us and not give us more freezing rain, but we just have to wait and see what happens.

Now the Bible uses the word *hope* in this way. Let me give you an example. In Acts 27 we have the story of the storm that Paul was involved in as he was traveling by ship as a prisoner on his way to Rome to appeal his case to Caesar. The storm became very severe, and the crew did everything that they knew to do to get the ship through the storm. But finally we come to this ominous verse which told how everyone on board ship felt about their predicament. And so Luke, who was with Paul, wrote these words:

And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away (Acts 27:20).

This meant that they felt doomed to die at sea. They had done everything they knew to do to escape such a fate, but it had not been enough. Whatever hope that had at the beginning, was gone. The Bible has many examples of this common way in which we all use the word *hope*.

But the Bible has another use of the word *hope* which is different from that. In other passages the word *hope* is used of *a certain expectation*. This amount to *a promise, a promise of God*. A passage which gives us a good explanation of this use of the word is Hebrews 6:17-20. Let me read

this passage to you:

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 6:17-20).

God gave *His promise*, and He confirmed it with *an oath*, and this added up to a *hope*. The writer called it, “a strong consolation.” *A hope is some future prospect which is absolutely certain because it is dependent upon the promise of God and His faithfulness in keeping His promise.* It is called *a hope* because we don’t yet have it, but we know that we will have it because God has promised that we will.

Maybe 1 John 3:2, 3 will help us even more to understand this word *hope*. In these verses this is what the Apostle John wrote:

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (I John 3:2-3).

Why can we be so sure of this, “know” it, when we can’t even predict what the weather will be like today or tomorrow or any day? It is because God has promised that we will be like our Lord some day. We are “predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,” God’s Son. Now I am quoting from Romans 8:29. Just a few verses before verse 29, Paul wrote these words:

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (Rom. 8:22-25).

Now I trust that you understand how Paul was using this word “hope” as he wrote to Timothy. He was speaking of a certain expectation that he and Timothy shared, a guaranteed hope that had not yet taken place, but would, without a doubt, come to pass.

Now a second question:

II. WHY DID PAUL CALL IT A “*BLESSED*” HOPE?

This is what we could well call, *the beatitude word*. This is the word that our Lord used in Matt. 5:3-11. It means *happy*. One grammarian translated it, “supremely happy” (Strong’s Concordance). This is not one of the passing joys of the world, but that which continues, which the world cannot give us, nor can the world take it away from us. It gives us a deep, abiding, delightful joy. The hope that the Apostle Paul was writing about was in every sense of the word, a “blessed hope.” It was a hope that will make you happy, and keep you happy. The world has nothing to offer like this. The only place we can find it is in the Lord.

But now let me ask:

III. WHAT IS THE “*BLESSED HOPE*” TO WHICH THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS REFERRING?

Let the Apostle Paul answered this question for us. It is “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is the appearing *in glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom the Apostle Paul called “the great God and our Saviour.” Our Lord promised that He would “come again, and receive” us “unto Himself, that where” He was, “there” we “may be also” (John 14:3). Jesus Christ is coming again, coming to take us to be where He is. This is *our happy hope*, the hope which is designed of God to make us supremely happy! Does it?

As you read through the beatitudes of Scripture, you realize that God has designed everything about our salvation to make us supremely happy. Even our trials are designed for our happiness. We often forget this, but it is true nevertheless. But of all the blessings which God has provided for us, I am sure that you would agree with me when I say that nothing should bring us greater joy than the hope we have, the guaranteed promise, that some day, *and it may be very soon*, the Lord will come, and we will be caught up to meet Him in the air, not only to be *forever with Him*, but to be *forever like Him*. Then there will be no more sin, no more temptations,

no more failures, no more broken fellowship, no possibility of ever displeasing the Lord again! If this doesn't make us happy, nothing else will be able to make us happy, but it is also an indication that there is something wrong in our own hearts.

But now for a last question:

IV. WHAT ARE WE TO BE DOING ABOUT THIS BLESSED HOPE?

This is where we probably all need to make some changes not only in the year ahead, but for the rest of our lives, or until the Lord Jesus actually returns.

The words which the Apostle Paul used with Titus were, "Looking for..." Let me explain what that verb means.

This is a very interesting verb because it combines several meanings:

- 1) It means that we are to accept this as our hope, to believe that it really is going to happen.
- 2) It means that we are expecting that He can come at any time.
- 3) And this is probably where we fail: It means that every day we are looking for Him, and disappointed when He does not come.

Now here is the test: HOW MANY DAYS DURING THE PAST YEAR HAS IT NOT ENTERED YOUR MIND THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST COULD COME THAT DAY? Would you want anyone to know? Perhaps we would all be embarrassed to answer that question.

Let's make it as personal as we can. What if you told some friends that you were coming to visit them, and when you arrived you found that they were on a trip, and had forgotten about your planned visit? It wouldn't make you very happy, would it? Well, the Lord has not told us when He is coming, but He has told us that He is coming. And the reason He hasn't said *when* is because *He wants us to be looking for Him, and expecting Him, every day!*

The verb, "Looking," in the Greek is a present participle, and it is in the plural, meaning that all of us are to be continually expecting the Lord to come all of the time, and disappointed when He does not come.

Concl: One of the things I appreciated about my seminary training was

the opportunity to hear Dr. Chafer speak of men he had known in the past, godly men, who were then with the Lord. One of those men was A. C. Gaebelein. He was the father of Frank Gaebelein who later became the present of Wheaton College. But Dr. Chafer used to say of Dr. A. C., that if you were with him at a conference (as Dr. Chafer frequently was), the last word he would have for you when he retired for the night was, "Well, the Lord didn't come today; maybe He will come and awake us out of our sleep tonight." And then when you would meet him in the morning, he would say, "Well, the Lord didn't come last night, perhaps this is the day that we will see Him."

That account has often come back to my mind when I have thought of Paul's words to Timothy, "Looking for that blessed hope." We know He is coming. We know that He can come today. But are we hoping that He will come today, and will we be disappointed at the end of the day if He has not come?

Let me ask another question for all of us to answer: When you think of all the things that make you happy, is this Blessed Hope at the top of the list? It should be, if you know the Lord as your Savior! What a glorious prospect this is! And it is entirely possible that this will be the day that the trumpet will sound, and we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

When we wish each other a Happy New Year, this surely should be one of the things that we have in mind. 1997 can be the most wonderful year of our lives if we obey what Paul told Timothy, and make it our daily habit, whatever hopes we may have to be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing..."

THE GRACE OF GOD, OUR TEACHER

Titus 2:11-15

Part 2

Intro: (Read the text.)

One criticism which is commonly aimed at the teaching of the grace of God is that it encourages sin, or at least that it does not discourage sin. How anyone can say that after reading the verses which I have just read to you, I do not know. The Apostle Paul not only said that the grace of God teaches us to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” but also that “we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” So the grace of God not only forbids “ungodliness” and submitting to “worldly lusts,” but it exhorts us to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. All of this is in verse 12.

But then when we get down to verse 14 we find the same emphasis. Christ died to “redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” So again we see that there is a negative and positive aspect to the teaching of the grace of God--negative toward “all iniquity”; positive toward “good works.”

Ephesians 2:8-10 gives us the same emphasis. (Quote.) We are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” not bad works. And it has been “ordained” by God that we should do “good works.” It is not just a hope that God has, but a result that has been decreed by God.

So we don't need the Law or anything else but the grace of God to make us the people that God wants us to be. Salvation comes to us by grace alone, and salvation is worked out in our lives by grace alone. Grace saves us, grace teaches us, and we can all say with the Apostle Paul,
 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Cor. 15:10).

Now let us look at what the Apostle Paul had to say to Titus in this very familiar passage.

I. THE GRACE OF GOD IS OUR TEACHER (Titus 2:11).

This, of course, is the equivalent of saying that *the God of grace* is our

Teacher. The object of teaching is to help others learn. This is the common Greek word for the teaching of children, and the object, contrary to a lot of our teaching today, was not just to communicate information, but the formation of character. And Paul's statement here indicates that when a person becomes a Christian he has to learn all over again how to live. How blessed is the person who comes to Christ with the realization that his basic need at that moment is to learn how to live as a Christian. Too often people think that they already know, and so they do not appreciate how much they need to learn--and this learning continues all through our lives. Sometimes God has to go back over lessons we have been taught before because living in this world it is easy for us to be pulled away from what it means to live with the Lord and for the Lord. This teaching is actually done by the Holy Spirit, and it is teaching which brings immediately to the Word of God. The word "teaching" also suggests that there may be times when discipline is necessary. Often this takes the form with God of letting us do what we want to do so that we will learn that we must learn in a deeper way to do what God wants us to do. And sometimes the lessons are not very pleasant for us to learn.

Now let us look at:

II. LESSON NUMBER ONE (Titus 2:12a).

The first thing that we have to learn is that we cannot continue to live the way we have been living. And the Apostle Paul described it all with three words which add up to two points: "*ungodliness*" and "*worldly lusts*." What did Paul have in mind?

When we were studying the Pastoral Epistles in the Tuesday Bible Class, we had to deal with the words *godly* and *ungodly* many times--or *godliness* and *ungodliness*. We have both words in this text. We learned that an ungodly person is one who has no concern about God, is not interested in pleasing God, and surely does not want to be like God. This is what we all were like before we came to Christ. It does not mean that we were the worst that we could be because there are many people whom the world would call *good* who are ungodly. They pay their bills. They are good to their children, and want their children to do the right thing. But they have no place for God in their lives. Their standards are worldly standards, not God's.

A godly person, on the other hand, is a person who has been drawn to God, or better yet, has been attracted to God, who wants to please God,

and who wants to be like God. An ungodly person is without God in this world. A godly person has God, or God has him (or her), and his motive in life is to please God, and wants to be like God.

But Paul did not just mention “ungodliness,” but also “worldly lusts.” A person who is not a Christian not only is ungodly, but he has his life filled with “worldly lusts”--that is, the things that people in this world live for. Perhaps we could understand “worldly lusts” better if we called them *worldly desires* because that is what Paul meant by this word. He, of course, would include improper sexual desires, but he also would include what we see all around us today, the craze for pleasure, and for things. The desire to get ahead in the business world regardless of what the price might be--such as the way a man will neglect his family to get ahead in his chosen profession. It is the way people live all around us every day. They feel, contrary to what the Bible tells us, and what we see illustrated in the lives of people every day, that their lives consist in the abundance of things which they possess. We all need things in order to live, but the tragedy is that people in the world are led to believe that their happiness depends on having all that they want.

Have you seen that license plate frame that says, “I would rather be shopping...”? Now there is nothing wrong with shopping. We all do it. But wouldn't you hate to be a person who is known as finding his greatest joy in shopping and getting things, things, things?

What does Paul say that we must do with our “ungodliness and worldly lusts”? Even as Christians we are susceptible to them. They are a constant threat to us. To live a life that is pleasing to God, Paul said long ago that there are some things that we cannot do. He said that we must *deny* them. What did he mean?

He meant that we must steadfastly refuse to be guided by these desires which are in all of our hearts. We must no longer live under their control. We must renounce that kind of a life. This is what Paul was saying in Romans 12:1, 2 and what John said in 1 John 2:15-17. We live in the world, but we are no longer “of the world”--as we will see again in just a moment. Anything that does not please God is sin, and we must make a break with those things which are displeasing to the God Who has saved us.

But let us remember also that the Christian life is not just a life where there are things that we do not do. There is a very important positive side

to living for the Lord. Let me call this:

III. LESSON NUMBER TWO (Titus 2:12b).

Here we have three words to be concerned about: “soberly...righteously...godly.”

To live “soberly” means that we need to exercise self-control in what we do and in what we want. It means that we need to be known for our moderation. We avoid excessiveness even in the necessities of life. We curb our desires. This word means to be in a right mind.

To live “righteously” is to live according to some standard, and we Christians know that the standard which has been set for us in to be found in the Word of God. A company which produces a product always has its standards which must be maintained--that is, if it is a reliable company. A company is very careful to have a good reputation, that they will stand behind what they make.

The standards for a Christian are not what you will learn from the world and the people who are a part of the world. The only place you will find it is in Scripture. There we learn what we should be, how we should live, and what our objectives should be. We who are in Christ are righteous before God, but the evidence of that will be that we will want to be righteous before men. That is the burden of the epistle of James, but it is really the burden of all of the Bible. Another word for what Paul had in mind which he spoke of living righteously, is the word OBEDIENCE!

The last word in our second lesson is the word “godly” which I have already defined. And this is a very important when we think of the life we are to live.

Let me illustrate it this way. Sometimes people seek to do right because they are afraid of the consequences of doing wrong. Now that is always a good thing to keep in mind--that there are consequences in the world and consequences with God if we fail to do what is right. But the Apostle John made a statement that we all should be familiar with. It is this:

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear:
because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made
perfect in love (1 John 4:18).

What does this verse tell us? It tells us that the Lord does not want our

obedience to Him done in fear--fear because of the consequences of disobedience. He wants us to obey Him because we love Him, and because we want to please Him, and because we want to be like Him, and like His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are motivated by our love for God. We are motivated because we want to please God. And we are motivated because we want to be like God. This is the only kind of obedience that pleases Him. This is what it means to "live godly."

But where is all of this to take place? In our homes? Yes! At church? Yes! But what did Paul say? He would include our homes, and our churches, but he said, "in this present world."

I grant you that it would be easier to live for the Lord if we were in heaven instead of being in this world, but this is where we are, and this is how the Lord wants us to live where we are: "in this present world." In Gal. 1:4 Paul called it "This present evil world." In both passages the word "world" is a translation of the Greek word for *age*, which views the world from the standpoint of time. This means that we are to live "soberly, righteously, and godly" in this world the way it is at this present time. As bad as it is, it is still possible, by the grace of God, to live to do God's will and to please Him the way things are in the world today. The temptations may be fierce which we have to face, but the grace of God is greater. And it magnifies the grace of God for us to live to please the Lord even when things are as bad as they are today.

What a difference it would make in all of our lives if this would be our main purpose for our lives during 1997, and on as long as we live.

But now notice in conclusion:

IV. LESSON NUMBER THREE (Titus 2:13, 14).

Here we come to the text we had earlier today. In context what does it seem to indicate? It indicates that the more we are seeking to live for the Lord, the more intense will be our desire to see the Lord Jesus return.

But why? Because it is was our Lord's purpose in dying for us to deliver us "from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." He wants us to live holy lives so that people will see that we belong to the Lord, and that we are zealous to do what He wants us to do.

Concl: As my conclusion, let us look at verse 15. (Read.)

The truth of Scripture is eternal and unchanging. And so are the exhortations. The grace of God teaches us what we must not do, what we are to do, and the spirit in which it must be done. But let us remember that this will always call for saying the same things again and again, exhorting one another to do what God wants us to do, and we must not allow anyone to keep us from declaring these wonderful truths.

Now as we think about our own lives, where do we stand tonight in our relationship with God, in our relationship with the world, and in our relationship with the Word of God. God in His grace continues to teach us, but this means that there must be daily exposure to the Word of God, and an earnest desire to draw upon God's grace that we might be the people that He has saved us to be.