

LIVING IN LIGHT OF OUR BLESSED HOPE 1
Titus 2:1-14

INTRO: I titled the message this morning, "Living In Light Of Our Blessed Hope." I have good news for you this morning: Jesus is coming very soon! I was talking with my daughter and son-in-law the other day and my daughter spoke of the blessed hope. She thought the name, "Blessed Hope Evangelical Church" might make a good name. Well, we have, over the years, stressed the soon return of Christ, which is our blessed hope. And so as soon as she mentioned the blessed hope, I thought it would be fitting, in light of our circumstances, to do a message on that. So I have dropped the series I was working on for a while.

So, turn to the book of Titus, chapter 2. Verses 1-14 were read for us already. But look at verses 11-14 (read). It speaks of looking for the blessed hope. If I were to translate this passage, I would translate it like this, "Looking, or waiting for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today, so called Christians all over the world are turning away from an expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. In its place, there is an ever growing interest in making this world a better place. Missions are placing more and more emphasis on teaching non-Christian cultures how to farm, how improve water supplies and how to become more prosperous instead of evangelizing them.

For some time there were three major end time views, views of eschatology. There was the most popular view, amillennialism, which has no conception of the rapture, though many of them taught the imminent return of Christ. Then there was premillennialism, which rose up once more after having been buried for about 1400 years. This view says that Jesus will return before the millennium and He will then set up the divine kingdom which will run for 1000 years with Christ as the head of the government. Then the government will literally be upon his shoulders, as we hear of so often at Christmas.

But there was another view that arose after that, which was called post millennialism. It said that man would make this world a better and better place to live until it ushered in a time of some duration where this earth would be a

peaceful and godly place to live. At the end of that time Christ would come. Then came two world wars, and this view, for the most part died.

But of recent years, that last view has seen a revival. It is not called post millennialism today. It is called things like, kingdom now theology or dominion theology or reconstructionism, the reconstruction movement. This is a fast growing view today and is fully emmergent. Listen to some modern day emergents:

Let me quote here from David Cloud, speaking of a number of influential modern day speakers. He says: "**Tony Campolo** hates dispensationalism and rejects the doctrine of Christ's imminent return. **Brian McLaren** mocks the "fundamentalist expectations" of a literal second coming of Christ with its attendant judgments on the world and assumes that the world will go on like it is for hundreds of thousands of years (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 305)."

"**Mark Driscoll** mocks the idea of a Rapture for believers and a one-world government with an Anti-christ who makes people wear a mark to buy, sell or trade (*Confessions of a Reformissional*, pp. 49-50)... Driscoll mocks the imminent Rapture. He claims that the Rapture doctrine is evidence of the sickness of American Christians and mocks those who have the goal of leaving "this trailer park of a planet before God's tornado touches down on all the sinners" (*The Radical Reformission*, p. 78).

Dan Kimball describes how that he rejected dispensational theology and the doctrine of an imminent Rapture and moved to his current position that "the kingdom of God is here, now" (*Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, pp. 87-90, 102).

"**Ed Stetzer** says it is wrong to worry about whether the Rapture is imminent. "When the disciples had an inordinate interest in the end times, much like we do today in North America among evangelicals, Jesus said, 'Do not get focused on that'" (*Breaking the Missional Code*, p. 40). Stetzer is referring to Acts 1:6-8. Jesus was not talking about the timing of the Rapture but about the coming of the kingdom of God" end quote.

In a day when we should be looking forward more and more to the imminent return of Christ, we are turning away from

that teaching. One of our folk who joined us from one of the churches in town said, "I knew very little of prophecy." But, if ever there should have been a day when Christians looked for the Lord's return, it is now. By all the signs Jesus gave in Matthew 24 and the events unfolding before us today, we ought to rejoice, for our redemption is drawing very near. Look at Matthew 24, where we are instructed to be ready at all times (read 36-42).

But as I considered our text, and then considered its context, I felt that this morning we should first look at the context in which our text is found. Then, next Sunday, Lord willing, we will look at the text itself.

I. THE CONTEXT OF OUR TEXT

A. The Prior Context (1-12)

In verses 1-12, we have the prior context of our text. Let us begin by reading verses 1-10 (read). Now why should Christians live like that? Why should older men; older women; younger women; younger men; servants live like instructed in this passage? Why should Christians live right? Why?

Well, notice it in verse 11, "For..." That is a causal conjunction and will give us the reason why we should live as the preceding passage has instructed. Why? Because the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. And this grace teaches us that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly. And it tells us what must be the situation or condition of our lives if we are to live soberly, righteously and godly? First, we must live a life that denies ungodliness and worldly lusts. Second, we must be looking for the blessed hope of Christians. And just what is that blessed hope? It is the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. It will be one of the most phenomenal events of all history. It will equal that of the flood. And this event is nothing shy of the rapture of the Church. It is when the bridegroom comes for His bride. It is the imminent return of Jesus Christ, or it is not a blessed hope at all.

And so, in verses 1-10, we have instructions to godly living. This passage instructs older men; younger

men; older women; younger women and servants. I went to see my Doctor the other day and he was talking about how people should live. He is a Muslim. And I said, "I have a passage of Scripture here that I was studying while I was waiting to see you. Could I read some for you?" And he said, "Let me see that." I had verses 1-14 printed out on a piece of paper. That way when I sit in the clinic I can study. So he read a number of verses and as he was reading he said, "That's right. That's right." He didn't read it all and I said I would like to read a few verses for him and I read verses 11-14. Pray for him. At first when I visited him he told me he did not discuss religion, but now he enjoys our discussions.

Well, in verses 1-10 we have instructions to various groups of people on living right. What a load of instruction is here, on living right. But notice that this last group, workers, are to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

Now, just how does one adorn the doctrine of God? Well, I see people who have adorned their bodies with all kinds of things. There are people who have adorned their houses with all kinds of things. This time of year, many adorn their houses or yards with all kinds of Christmas lights. Some people adorn their vehicles with all kinds of chrome or lights and so on.

But now we ask, how do you adorn the doctrine of God? We get some indication of the meaning in 1 Peter 3 (read 1-6). The word translated 'to adorn' here is kosmos. It comes from the word world. We get our word 'cosmetics' from this world. In the adjective sense, it speaks of orderly arrangement or adorning. By the way, let me just point out that the word 'merely' in the clause, 'do not let your adornment be *merely* outward' as in the NKJV is not in the original text. The instruction to women is to not let their adornment be outward. But what are they to do? Well, first, their adornment is to be the hidden person of the heart. When a woman's hidden person of the heart is of a gentle and quiet spirit, this is godly adornment. This is incorruptible beauty. It is very precious in the sight of the Lord. So a godly woman adorns herself with a gentle and quiet spirit.

But let us ask second, how then is she to adorn her physical body? Well, to that 1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, "...in like manner also, that the women adorn (there is our word) themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works."

So, how does one adorn the doctrine of God? Well, from all the instructions the passage has given, it is by how one lives! Older men are taught how to live. Older women are taught how to live. Young men and women, and those who work for others are taught how to live. We adorn the doctrine of God by how we live.

Well, that brings us to verses 11-12. Now we are getting close to our text. Look at Titus 2:11-12 (read). The grace of God, that is that grace that brings salvation, has appeared to all men. I believe this grace is the Gospel, the good news of the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ! This grace, the Gospel, the life of our Lord, teaches us that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

So we must briefly consider what it means to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age. I think Jamieson, Faucett and Brown are right in their commentary when they say, "'Soberly,' that is, with self restraint; righteously or justly, in relation to our neighbor, and godly or piously, in relation to God." So it is life with relation to ourselves; with relation to others and with relation to God.

You see, the grace of God teaches us to live soberly, righteously and godly. We look first at this word, 'soberly'. It comes from two words; the word to save and from the thinking part of the mind, the phreen. I would see it as Spirit controlled thinking. You see, this relates to myself; how I think and view things. We could spend a message right here. Do I see life through spiritual or fleshly or worldly eyes? How do I think? The true grace of God will teach us to think right.

Secondly, the grace of God teaches us to live righteously. This second word, righteously, when referring to man, speaks, I think, of our relationships with people. Our actions towards each other should be righteous. In a time like we are experiencing right now, that is a very huge requirement. And how we think within ourselves has a huge impact on how we act towards others. Oh, to live right! What a huge thing that is. How can we claim we are experiencing the grace of God if we do not live righteously? We cannot.

Last, Paul says the grace of God teaches us to live godly. The word here is *eusebos*. It speaks of our life in relation to God. If we live godly, then we will live right in relation to God. What is our spiritual life like? How is our prayer life? How is our Bible reading? What is our church life like? If we live a godly life, this will be in order.

Now let me give you a warning about the godly life. This word, *eusebos*, occurs only twice in the NT. The other time is in 2 Timothy 3:12. Turn to it (read). You see, it says that 'all' who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Now notice the order. First, it speaks of all that live godly. Let me translate this more literally. All the living godly ones, shall suffer persecution. When one lives godly, present tense, then future tense, persecution will follow. Persecution follows godliness. One of our folk told me this week, "Sometimes I wish I could live a mediocre Christian life." He was serious. And why would he say that? Because if you live a truly godly life, it brings with it serious relational problems. Persecution is relational.

Now, before we can live soberly, righteously and godly, Paul gives us two other things that must be happening in our lives. In the original they are found in two participial phrases. The first is that we must deny ungodliness and worldly desires. Ungodliness is *asebos*. It is godliness negated. It is living against that which is godly. The opposite of what we just spoke of before.

Then we must deny worldly lusts. Let me say something about this word 'lusts'. In the original it is simply desires. When we speak of 'lusts' we speak of evil desires. But the word is simply desires. But here it is modified by the word 'worldly'. Therein lies the instruction of this phrase.

So we must ask this question: just what are worldly desires? Well, this subject needs a whole message. But in short, all that is in the world; the wrong desires of the flesh; the wrong desires of the eyes and the pride of life is included in this word world. We call all these lusts. That is because we understand that these desires are wrong desires. This makes them lusts in our way of speaking.

Now I want us to notice one more thing in Titus 2 in verses 11-12 (read). We are to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present age. The KJV says that is to take place in this present world. The word here is not the word 'world' which is kosmos. It is the word 'aiwn', which is an age. There are two ages, this age and the age to come. After that are the ages of the ages. You can find that in Scriptures. As I view it, when it refers to 'this age', it is the age that began at creation and ends at the millennium. The millennium is the age to come. After the millennium come the ages of the ages, that is forever after. It is the time in which we live now that we are to live like this.

The other day I read a passage in the OT that spoke of the millennium. And never before have I longed so much for a time of peace.

B. The following context

Well, we have looked at the context that goes before our text, which is verse 13. Now we want to look briefly at the context that follows, and that is verse 14 (read). This verse is a description of the work of Christ. You see, what is so great about the appearing of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ is that He gave Himself for us. What does that mean? Well, He, God, tasted the most humiliating death ever invented; and He God, shed His blood in death that we

might have life. He gave Himself for us. He hung where we should have hung.

But He had a very huge purpose in mind when He did that. The first purpose was that He might redeem us from every lawless deed. Now we need to consider first the word 'to redeem.' There are two words in the original NT that are translated to redeem. There is the word, *exagorazo*. It means, 'to buy out or back'. What is in view is the slave market. A slave could be bought back or out of the slave market.

The other word is *lutroo*. Vines says it means to release on receipt of payment. He says further, and I quote, "While both... are translated 'to redeem' *exagorazo* does not signify the actual 'redemption,' but the price paid with a view to it, *lutroo* signifies the actual 'deliverance,' the setting at liberty."

Let me explain. What is in view is our bondage to sin. Before we are saved, we are slaves to sin. But Christ paid our redemption price to buy us out of this slavery to sin. The word *lutroo*, which is used in our text, signifies the actual deliverance. I was saved when I was 22 years old. As a new Christian I was in bondage to cigarettes. It was not until about a year after I was saved that I was actually set free from smoking. Now, for some 40 years I have been absolutely free from smoking.

So the first purpose, as the KJV says it, is that He might redeem us from all iniquity. The word literally means lawlessness. He wanted to redeem us from all sin; everything that is against the law of God. The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary says that this redemption is closely related to forgiveness (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). When our sins are forgiven, we are set free from them. Then in our Christian lives, in the process of sanctification, we should be continually set free from sin.

God wants to set us free from every sin. Sin brings us into bondage, that is we become its slave. Maybe this morning you recognize something that has you in bondage. It may be the worldliness we spoke of before. Maybe it has to do with the mind, how we

think. Maybe it is related to living right with our neighbor, or with our relationship with God. Whatever it is, if we are in bondage, Christ came to buy us back and set us free from every bondage, every lawless deed.

But that is not all. He wants to redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself, His own special people. This week I was told that one brother in the church was talking to another and he asked him, "Are you for real?" You know what his question was? Are you really a Christian, or do you just go through the motions? Are you for real or are you a nominal Christian. Is that a legitimate question? Could I ask you this morning, are you for real? Or do you act the part? When we are acting, that is hypocrisy.

After some major difficulties, one of our men said to me, "Sometimes I wish I could be a mediocre Christian." Do you think he was boasting? No! Was he complaining? No! He had suffered for what he believed, and he had carefully studied what he believed. And truly believing was making his life difficult with others. Could I ask you, do you sometimes wish you could be a mediocre Christian? That may not sound good but it is a very good sign.

Leonard Ravenhill has said that he believes less than 5% of professing Christians are true Christians. Then let me add another problem to that. In non-persecuted countries, probably less than 5% of those 5% are solidly sold out to Jesus Christ. It is these 5% of 5% that will obey Christ no matter what it costs them. Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-39, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies *will be* those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

Jesus said in another place, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

CONCL: Well, this morning we have looked at the context of these words, "...looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." We looked at the context before our verse as found in verses 1-12. Then we asked this question: why should Christians live like that? Why should older men; older women; younger women; younger men; servants live like instructed in this passage? Why should Christians live right? Why?

Well, the first word in verse 11, the word, "For..." indicated that an answer was forthcoming. Why should Christians live like that? Because the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. And this grace teaches us that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age. And what must be the situation of our lives if we are to live soberly, righteously and godly? First, we must live a life that denies ungodliness and worldly lusts. Second, we must be looking for the blessed hope of Christians.

I do not want to bore you with grammar. But as I pondered this text, I could not determine if the phrase, 'looking for the blessed hope' is connected to the pronoun 'we' or to the verb 'should live'. In the Greek, either is possible. But if it is connected to the verb, the phrase 'looking for the blessed hope' becomes the answer as to how will be spurred on to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age.

If that is so, go to 1 John 3. 1 John 3:2-8 says this, "2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (In the words of our text he learns to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age. So we go on.) 4 Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. 6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin.

Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Could I ask you this morning, are you looking forward to the return of Christ? If not, check first to see if you are for real. And if so, check and see if you are a mediocre Christian. Are you one of those of 5% of the 5%? If not, may I challenge you to a life of persecution? Are you an out and out Christian? Let me warn you, it is a persecuted way to live, but it is the best way to live!