

Titus 2:11-15 | For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Titus 2:11-15 | Appeared, Appearing

After Paul's instruction for how to live rightly in the life God has placed you he provides the reason which lies behind Christian living. Why remain faithful to your spouse. Why repent and forgive? Why pursue the difficulty of laboring over children? Why keep taking the blows of the problems of the world? In order to maintain our steadfast pursuit of the Lord we must understand the story that we are in. I was talking with a friend this week who ministers to college students which seems very difficult to me, because although college was not that long ago there is a sense in which anything before 2020 was a very long time ago. And he shared this generalization, that while millennials concluded that life is meaningless therefore we should try get the most pleasure, Gen Z has concluded that life is meaningless therefore what's the point of trying.

To the millennial any exhortation towards sacrifice is useless and to Gen-z any exhortation is useless. I'm speaking generally of course, #notallcretans. That's why morality in our culture has fundamentally been reduced to coping. And right living of others as we see it, is that which promotes the most coping. So there is lots of morality in our culture but it's homeless morality, now this is the same as in the time of Paul's writing.

Paul is a contemporary of Seneca, one of the great Stoic philosophers of Rome, and Seneca and the other Stoics represent a philosophical shift from questions of where are we and what is there, to how can we live in a place that ends in death? The Philosopher is no longer considered to be the person who figures out what is there or how we know what is there, and instead is described as a physician of the soul. Now why this shift?

I learned this story from John Vervaeke, a cognitive scientist out of University of Toronto in his series, *Awakening from the Meaning Crisis*. What he describes is a response to the conquests of Alexander the Great who of course Hellenized the Mediterranean. Before this great conquest groups of people would have lived in the same city state for as far back as anyone could remember. And you knew the story of your people and your place in the world. The systems of power were not many degrees removed from your personal relationships. But now you were primarily a citizen of an empire which required travel and commerce and in a language that belonged not to your family but to the world. Vervaeke describes the experience of this conquest as *Domicide*: the death of home.

This death of home meant you were disconnected from your past, and you had no sense of where you were going. In this existential angst of deep alienation the question becomes how do we cope with this pain? So imagine being on the other side of Domicide and receiving an exhortation to live dutifully and lay down your immediate pleasure for the good of your people. The question is, “what people?”

That is why in order for Paul to truly communicate the nature of his exhortations which he previously laid out for how older men, younger men, older women, younger women and bondservants were to live (exhortation which at face value is not very different from Seneca’s), Paul has to put you back in your story, and bring you to the sense of who you are, what has happened to your people, and what is to come for you and your people.

1. What has happened to your people

Titus 2:11 | For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,

Why are you to live a Christian life? For example why are you to pursue self-control in a Christian sense rather than merely gathering as many pleasurable experiences as you can? Well you have to know what has happened in the past. What story you are in. What has happened is the Grace of God has appeared and it has brought salvation for all people. I’ll work backwards. For all people is Paul showing that the groups he has referenced above in the church, older men, younger women, bondservants, all people have received this salvation in Christ. It is all theirs.

What is it that has appeared, it is the grace of God for his people. The promised seed who would crush the serpents head and destroy death by taking death upon himself and conquering over the grave in his resurrection and atoning for the sins of his people. This has happened! And it is the grace of God which is the fundamental motivator for Christian living.

Now wouldn’t grace be like an anti-motivator? You are free from the curse of sin because of what Christ accomplished, therefore live however you want! We’ll this misunderstands the nature of the slavery we were under. In our sin we are trapped in only being able to do that which our hearts desire, but what our hearts desire leads to rebellion against God and therefore death. In Christ our natures are transformed and we are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness so in our freedom we pursue what is right. Remember Paul is arguing against those who are attacking Christian freedom. But we must understand Christian freedom rightly, Help us Westminster Divines

WCF 20.1 The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and, in their being delivered

from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; as also, in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a childlike love and willing mind.

2. Life in the Present

Titus 2:12 | training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age

That's why Paul can talk about the grace and salvation of God being a training for us. The training is a renunciation and a taking up. We renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. Ungodliness is the sum of immorality and idolatry which always go together. Because remember, you're a creature made to worship God, when you don't worship God you don't stop being a worshipper, you just worship something else as God. That's why ungodliness makes you a slave to worldly passions. Sex, materialism, entertainment, you become ruled by your passions.

But this grace of God sets us free from our slavery to the world the flesh and the devil and trains us to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives right here in this present age. So because Christ has come and set us free in the past, here in this present age we are trained to live lives that are pleasing to God. That does not mean perfect or sinless but it does mean upright, self controlled and godly. Ultimately this means lives that are lived in hope.

3. Hope

Titus 2:13 | Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

Our time in this life is a time in pursuit of godliness, waiting for the appearing of the glory of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. This means that our lives are lives which are lived in hope. In order to live lives of meaning in the present we have to know where we've come from and where we are headed. Where we've come from is through the waters. We're the people God has rescued and when he rescued us he gave us a blessed hope. That is a happy future. We are aiming towards something good. And this blessed hope is the appearing of Jesus himself.

The Trinity is not so much heard in the New Testament as it is overheard. But here is one of those examples where you see how deeply this mystery of the Trinity has worked in the heart of Paul and the writers of the New Testament. The referent is to one person who appears and this person is our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God. Our Blessed hope that we look forward to is another appearing, like the one we now look back to which was when the Grace of God appeared at Christ's first coming. What's incredible

about this hope in all the world is that it provides a hope in the face of death, which frees us to be able to lay our lives down in the present and know we miss out on know joy, or pleasure, or goodness, because we are looking forward to the coming of our God who saved us.

4. A People

Titus 2:14 | who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

When we are looking forward to the appearing of the Glory of Christ, we are looking forward to being in the presence of the one who gave himself up for us. So that we might be redeemed, freed from lawlessness and made a people for himself, purified for his own possession and zealous for good works.

Go back to the first century on the island of Crete, and a culture that no longer really has their own history, and no longer feels like their own people, and the world is trying to figure out how to cope with a life of meaninglessness that ends in death. Seneca is speaking and Paul is speaking. You decide to go to both because your anxious and despairing. Seneca teaches you:

“True happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future, not to amuse ourselves with either hopes or fears but to rest satisfied with what we have, which is sufficient, for he that is so wants nothing. The greatest blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not.”

Paul teaches you: For all people Christ died, if you're slave or free, old man young man old woman young woman. Come to him and you will find that you are not homeless. This life is full of suffering. But you have hope. Fix your mind on the hope of Jesus Christ. It is no foolish hope because he died and rose again from the dead. He accomplished our salvation in his death, and in his resurrection he was raised to be our Lord and is putting his enemies under his feet. Pursue goodness in him. Be zealous for good works in his name because they will be fruitful and accomplish a glory beyond imagination.

Christian remember what has happened in Christ on the cross, remember where you're headed, and for that reason zealously pursue good works.