

Text: Titus 2:11-14 (Pew Bible, pg.1182)

Title: “Saying No, Saying Yes”

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to Titus 2:11. Paul instructs Titus, a pastor on the island of Crete, as to how and what he is to teach the various groups in the church ... older men, older women, younger women, young men and slaves. There is a particular way that they are to behave to reflect the life of Jesus in the particular situation in life. And the reason they are to live in this way is described in Titus 2:11-14. Follow along as I read.

ILLUSTRATION – Eric Liddell

I’m in a series of messages to begin the New Year entitled “Holy Habits.” You are into new habits, and the most important habits we have are the ones that are about following Jesus. I’m also reintroducing you to our...

BLUEPRINT FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

PASSIONATE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST:

1. LEARN AND APPLY THE TRUTH OF GOD’S WORD

Passionate followers in Jesus Christ are in the habit of learning and applying the truth of God’s Word.

2. OBEY GOD AND DENY SELF

And they are in the habit of obeying God and denying self. Jesus said...

Luke 9:23 - “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Now that phrase, “Obey God and Deny Self,” runs counter to what our own selfish flesh tells us to do. It runs counter to what the world tells us to do. The rebellion in the human heart runs so deep that, even after we are saved, we want to do thing our way.

If my only motivation in life is just to live every day and try to be as happy and comfortable as I can possibly be, then I’m not the least bit interested in obeying God and denying any desires I have. After all, my motivation in life is just to be as happy and comfortable as I can be.

However, if I am consumed with another motivation, then things might look differently. In looking at the life that God calls us to here in His Word, I want you to notice that there are two powerful engines that are work here.

ILLUSTRATION – Most of us have been stuck at a railroad crossing before. I certainly have. It seems that there is someone somewhere who can monitor how late someone is running. They also have control over when the railroad crossing lights begin to flash and the barricades come down. You watch the train go by there's the engine ... the big one that makes a loud noise. That engine is pulling the cars behind it ... cars filled with coal or whatever. Finally you see that the end of the train is approaching and there is another engine. It's making a lot of noise as it moves past. So there's an engine in the front pulling the train, and there's an engine in the back pushing the train.

And as we think about the life God calls us to live in this world as followers of Jesus, we are not on our own. In fact, there are two powerful engines that move us. Do you notice that twice in the verses we read we see the word “appear.”

Titus 2:11 - For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Titus 2:13 - while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

So God's eternal purpose is to display His *saving power* through the changed lives of His *saved people*. When you see strong exhortations to holy living like we find here in these verses, the purpose behind it is that the world would glorify a holy God who made such a change in people.

So there's an engine that is *pushing* us and an engine that is *pulling* us ... these two appearances. Our passage first describes the “engine” that is pushing us...

1. GOD'S GRACIOUS SALVATION

Titus 2:11 - For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Are you glad that phrase “all men” is in there? That tells me that none of us are beyond the reach of grace. God's grace appeared because we needed it. We can't change ourselves; we can't save ourselves. So God's grace appears like a shining light into our dark, hopeless situation. No matter what you've done, or how bad you've messed up your life, God loves you and extends grace that can save you. Now there's something about this grace that brings salvation to us...

Titus 2:12 - It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

So this grace works in us. When God's grace comes to us in salvation it produces something in us. It sets us on a new course. It replaces old desires with new desires.

In fact, the word “teaches” means “trains.” It provides instruction or discipline that result in our developing the right habits of behavior. The way Paul puts it here means “continually trains us...” The grace of God that appeared to bring salvation to us pushes us ... it trains us ... it disciplines us. God didn't save you to leave you the way you are. He has a tremendous change in mind for you and for me.

ILLUSTRATION – Eleanor’s training

Well the grace of God that appeared to bring salvation to us pushes us toward a new life:

So the grace of God trains us to form proper holy habits of behavior in our lives. The grace of God doesn’t just save us from the *stains* of sin ... it saves us from the *chains* of sin. It breaks the pattern of sin in our lives and replaces it with the patterns of righteousness.

Specifically it trains us to...

SAY “NO” TO: (deny self)

- **Godless living**

“ungodliness” = godlessness ... to act as though God were not real. It’s easy for us to become practical atheist. If we really believe that God exists, and that He is who He says He is, then it will affect the ways we live our lives.

Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

- **Worldly living**

“worldly passions” = passions are not necessarily wrong. Some of passions (desires) God gives to us (to eat or drink or love our families, etc.). What we are to say “no” to are the “worldly” passions ... the desires that consume people of the world who do not know God ... the desires that characterize the spirit of the world.

1 John 2:15 - Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:16 - For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

QUOTE: Bernard of Clairvaux was a famous preacher from the 1100s. In one of his sermons he said this about these verses we are studying: “We deny ‘worldly lusts’ when we withhold our consent from them, when we refuse the delight which they suggest, and the act to which they solicit us, nay, tear them up by the roots out of our soul and mind.”

We say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions when...

- We change channels when something inappropriate shows up – “No, not going there!”
- We don’t let our minds or our eyes linger on something immoral – “No, not going there!”
- We refuse to stew over an offense that has been done to us – “No, not going there!”
- We stop our lips before gossip or hateful comments come out – “No, not going there!”

And we say “no” to these things in order to say “yes” to something else ... to live a certain way.

Titus 2:12 - It teaches us to ... live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

SAY “YES” TO: (three adverbs show us how we are to say “yes”):

- **Restraint in relationship with ourselves**

Titus 2:12 - It teaches us to ... live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

“self-controlled” = pertaining to being sensible and moderate in one’s behavior—‘sensible, sensibly, moderate, moderately.’

- **Rightness in our relationships with others**

Titus 2:12 - It teaches us to ... live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

“upright” = pertaining to being right as the result of being justified and deserved—‘right, just.’

- **Reverence in our relationship with God**

Titus 2:12 - It teaches us to ... live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

“godly” = to worship well ... pertaining to being devoted to a proper expression of religious beliefs. In other words, we take God seriously. Earlier we talked about “ungodliness.”

1 Timothy 4:7b - Train yourself to be godly.

And all this we are to do “in this present age,” that is, the world we live in right now. You see, in our world, in our culture there are all these thoughts, opinions, philosophies and values floating around. And this present age is polluted and perverted, but it is in this world that we are to live say “yes” and say “no.”

Why? Again, God's eternal purpose is to display His *saving power* through the changed lives of His *saved people*. When you see strong exhortations to holy living like we find here in these verses, the purpose behind it is that the world would glorify a holy God who made such a change in people.

So there is a powerful motivation behind this saying yes and saying no. There is an engine that is pushing us ... the gracious salvation of God. And there is an engine that is pulling us ... something in front of us that is pulling us ... and here it is:

2. CHRIST’S GLORIOUS APPEARING

Titus 2:13 - while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

This is what is out there ahead of us in the future that is pulling us toward this lifestyle.

Jesus Christ is, at once, our great God and our Savior. That's right. The Jesus who was born in Bethlehem's manger and died on Calvary's cross is "our great God and Savior." After He was buried Jesus rose again and later ascended to the right hand of the Father. There will be a day when He appears and He will be manifested in a way that He has never been seen on earth.

And we are waiting for this. But the word "wait" doesn't mean like you're waiting at the doctor's office ... flip through the magazine on the table, check your email on your phone, maybe doze off and take a nap. No, this word means to continuously remain in a state with expectancy concerning a future event.

ILLUSTRATION – Company's coming. Get the house clean and keep the house clean.

What are we awaiting with great expectation? The glorious coming and appearance of Jesus Christ. Jesus will be personally revealed. If you are alive when this happens, it will be the first time you will have seen Jesus personally. Jesus will take center stage. His radiant appearing will put everything and everyone else into the shadows. You will see the fire in His eyes. You will see His lips move when He speaks.

All of history is moving toward this awesome event. As believers it is our "blessed hope." It is our confident expectation that God has greater and better things ahead for us. Why is it our blessed hope ... our "happy hope"? It is the final installment of God's great redemptive work in our lives ... this is where everything is moving for us as believers. Remember, when God saves you He has a changed life in mind for you.

Philippians 3:20 - But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Timothy 4:8 - Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Do you love His appearing? Do you long for his appearing? Do you feel that way about the appearing of Christ? I mean, do you think about it all the time? "I wonder if today is the day." And when it does come to your mind does your heart want it ... does it create an eagerness to see Jesus? In fact, do you pray for His appearing? The early church had a greeting and a one-word prayer they prayed repeatedly ... Maranatha ... "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Do you long for His appearing? Are you waiting expectantly for it to happen? If not, why?

- Is it because you're saved, but you've simply never been taught this important truth and you hadn't really thought about it in these terms. But now that you know you feel differently. Maybe you will get up tomorrow and think, "Is today the day?"
- Or perhaps you're not eagerly awaiting the second coming of Jesus because your love for Jesus has grown cold. Christ isn't all that precious to you and your longings are after other things or other people. Maybe this creates in you a sobering realization that you don't love Jesus like you use to or like you should ... and you'll repent.
- Or perhaps you're not eagerly awaiting the appearing of Jesus because you know you're not saved. You know it's true, but you haven't said "yes" to Jesus Christ.

Now remember that this is the "engine," that future, that is pulling us toward something. Our Savior Jesus is coming to put the final touches on our redemption. Oh, we have been saved and redeemed already if we have trusted in Christ for the gift of eternal life. That's a done deal. But there is part of our redemption that will not come until we are resurrected and our bodies are forever set free from our sinful tendencies and weaknesses.

So when Jesus comes He will come to bring to a climax that great work for which He came in the beginning (the gracious salvation that has already come that is *pushing* us). And here is the great work He came to accomplish and that will be accomplished in our lives:

Titus 2:14 - who 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.

Again, Jesus didn't give Himself to leave us unchanged.

He intends to redeem us of all "wickedness." That's another word for sin that means the transgression of the law of God. God's aim in our redemption was to deliver us from the penalty of sin, but also the activity of sin.

Jesus came to purify *for Himself* a people that are His very own. There will be something about the way we live our lives that say to Jesus and to the world, "I belong to Him."

He intends to purify for Himself people who are eager to do what is good ... *eager!* The word is the word from which we get our word "zeal" or "zealot." I don't know about you, but I'm not there yet. Sometimes I am eager to do what is good ... sometimes I readily obey God without arguing and pursue moral excellence. Other times I wrestle with it. I'm not zealous.

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

So there's of the gracious salvation of God like an engine behind us, pushing us to this life. And there's the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ like an engine out there ahead of us pulling us into this life. Quit fighting. Say "no" to self and "yes" to God.