

A TOP SHELF LIFE

Titus 2:11-15

Hymns: #580 If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee; #185 Lo, He Comes

Readings: Titus 2:11-15; 3:4-8

Background: In my study, I have a book case full of books. Books on church history, theological works, writings both new and old. But the top shelf of my book case is reserved for my prized and cherished books. Some are prized for they are rare antique works. Others are cherished like old friends who have comforted me over and over again through the years. But because they are prominently displayed on the top shelf, they can't stand up straight on their own. So, on either end I have two bookends, equally cherished, gifts given to me. These bookends are small globes of the mapped earth that spin on their axis. These two bookends keep my best, cherished, top shelf books upright and protected.

I want you to keep this image in mind this morning as we look at the Grace of God which our reading in Titus tells us has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. Our reading also speaks of a second appearing for which we are waiting. These two appearings are like two, global and universal doctrinal bookends that inform us how we are to live between the two times. They keep us living upright and protected lives. I have titled this morning's ministry in the Word: "A Top Shelf Life".

TEXT: 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. 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, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 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. 15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

1) TWO APPEARING'S OF JESUS CHRIST

A) First Appearing- Doctrinal Bookend of the Incarnation

- i) God is not simply One, He is Triune: The Trinity
 - (1) Doctrine of Election
 - (a) Jesus Christ Himself is the sphere of our election Eph. 1:4
 - (b) There is no other "hidden decree"
 - (c) Takes us off the see-saw debate of having to choose either Calvin or Armenius; the Sovereignty of God or The Free Will of Man
 - (2) Doctrine of Adoption/Sonship
 - (a) Predestination not unto heaven or hell; but unto adoption as Sons Eph.1:5 and conformity to the likeness of His Son Rom. 8:29
 - (b) To share (Lit. fully acquire as one's own possession 2 Thes. 2:14) in the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (i) Be one in and with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit relationship (John 17:20-26)
 - (ii) Participate in the divine Nature (2 Pet.1:4)
- ii) Jesus Christ is Fully God and Fully Man United
 - (1) Organic and ontological connection between God and Humanity in Jesus Christ the God-Man has appeared.
 - (2) Early Church Fathers understood sin to be more than a legal matter; it was organic corruption
 - (a) "The unassumed is the unhealed" (Gregory Nazianzus)

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- (b) When the Creator becomes a creature; lifting fallen adamic humanity up into Himself, fallen adamic corruption is healed and humanity is “recapitulated” out of Adam and into Jesus (Rom.5:12-19)
- (3) Jesus is our Vicarious Man
 - (a) Where He goes, He takes all of us with him
 - (b) He is our response to the Father and the source of our faith
- iii) The First Doctrinal Bookend establishes the Gospel of Grace
 - (1) It announces as good news something that has already been accomplished
 - (2) It calls for responsive participation by faith and welcome reception
 - (a) Without this, one still confirms his election in Christ, but does so in that which Christ Jesus took upon himself FOR US, namely judgement and death.
 - (3) It is the fulfilment of the first Prophecy ever made in the Bible; Gen 3:15
 - (a) He is the seed of the woman who would crush Satan’s head.

B) Second Appearing- Doctrinal Bookend of Prophecy

- i) V.13 “The glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”
 - (1) This is the Rapture of the Church
 - (a) A blessed hope v.13
 - (b) A comforting hope 2 Thes.4:18
 - (c) A purifying hope 1 John 3:3
 - (2) The second book end which is His Rapture of the true Church fulfils the prophetic promise made in the first book end of the Incarnation:
 - (a) Divine Union in the “Father’s House” (John 14:1-4)
- ii) Prophecy held in contempt by many in the last days
 - (1) 2 Pet.3:3-5 “First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4They will say, “**Where is this 'coming' he promised?** Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” 5But **they deliberately forget**
- iii) Understanding prophecy is critical in the last days
 - (1) 2 Pet. 1:19 “And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you **will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts”.

2) HE TEACHES US HOW TO LIVE BETWEEN HIS TWO APPEARINGS

A) V.11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.

- i) Grace **Teaches Us** - παιδεύουσα- defined as: "a child under development with strict training; to train up a child so they mature and realize their full potential (development). This requires necessary discipline (training), which includes administering chastisement (punishment).
 - (1) Adoption/Sonship is eternally secure in Christ and guaranteed by the Spirit
 - (2) Yet is a growing and maturing process for us
- ii) The two great doctrinal bookends of Grace seen in the Incarnation and Prophecy keep us standing straight/ “upright”, as we grow and learn:

B) To say No!

- i) Learning to say NO is one of the first lessons in our child training and development
- ii) Ungodliness- ἀσέβειαν- a lack of respect, showing itself in bold irreverence and contempt; failing to honor what is sacred – especially in the outward (ceremonial) sense

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- (1) This loss of propriety and dishonouring of the sacred in peoples' appearance; their homes; their disordered and idle lives; contempt for beauty and glory of liturgical and sacramental heritage is everywhere; inside and outside the professing church.
 - (2) The upcoming postal ballot on SSM is a prime example of that which Grace teaches us to say NO to.
 - iii) Worldly κοσμικὰς- Passions- ἐπιθυμίας- defined as: inordinate desire for what is forbidden, lust.
 - (1) Again, the SSM and LGBTI agenda is nothing more than the inordinate and lustful desire for that which a Gracious God has forbidden.
 - (2) How can this possibly compare with adoption as a son or daughter to share in the eternal Glory of the Triune God?
- C) Teaches us to live:**
- i) **Self-controlled** - σωφρόνως –(moderately; reflecting **the radical-balance birthed within by faith** from the Lord (used only in Tit 2:12)
 - (1) This radical balance is discovered and maintained through having leaned to say NO; not only to ungodliness but also to “good things” that would overcommit us, take us out of our lane, and out of step with the Spirit.
 - (a) “Unforced rhythms of grace” (Matt. 11:28-30 MSG)
 - (b) “Better one fistful with tranquillity than two with toil and striving after the wind” (Ecc.4:6)
 - (2) Sonship is being led by the Spirit: “...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14)
 - ii) **Upright** – like the books on the top shelf, the Grace of God’s doctrinal bookends of the Incarnation and Prophetic keeps us from falling over; it keeps our best and cherished God given thoughts, words, reflections straight; upright; honoured; respected; protected and in order for quick access in times of need.
 - iii) **Godly lives**- a godly life is one “that shines like the stars in the universe while holding out the word of life in a crooked and depraved generation (Phil.2:13)
 - (1) A godly life is prophetic life, leading others to Christ, even as the prophesied star appeared heralding the birth of the Messiah led the Magi to Him (Num. 24:17-19)
 - (2) A godly live is a prophetic life, paying attention to prophecy “as to a light shining in a dark place” awaiting the morning star’s rising in our hearts- a rapture symbol.
- D) Teaches us to Wait**- προσδεχόμενοι- defined as, to receive and welcome with warm reciprocity in a personal (open) manner; to wait actively, expectantly willing to receive all that is hoped for.
- i) Waiting for the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ and His rapture and rescue of us from the coming wrath (1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9) is not a passive, dispassionate waiting.
 - ii) Have you truly allowed yourself to be recalibrated and comforted by His promise to imminently come and take you to be with Him in the Father’s House?
 - iii) This is a zealous waiting which is exactly what His redemption produces in us
- 3) HE REDEEMS US, PURIFIES US AND PRODUCES ZEAL IN US**
- A) Redeem**-λυτρώσῃται- defined as "a ransom-price; to release (set free) by paying the full ransom; to restore "something back, into the possession of its rightful owner.
- i) Jesus has paid our ransom and restored us back to our rightful owner: The Triune God of Grace

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- B) Purifies for Himself**
 - i) Purifies our Conscience from dead works (Heb. 9:14) and from the guilt of sin (Heb.10:2)
 - ii) Purifies Us from all sin (1 Jon 1:7) and unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)
- C) Eager to do what is good**
 - i) Eager- ζηλωτήν – zealous- The root (zē-, "zeal") literally means "hot enough to boil"; something very fervent ("red-hot") as with Spirit-fuelled zeal to serve the Lord.
 - (1) Rom. 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord
 - (2) John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me"
 - (3) Gal. 4:18 It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you
 - (4) Rom. 10:1-3 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness
 - (5) Antithesis of being "lukewarm" (Rev.3:16)

4) THESE, THEN, ARE THE THINGS YOU SHOULD TEACH

- A) These are the very things that the apostle Paul instructed Titus to teach**
 - i) Thus, these are key elements of the "apostolic tradition/teaching/paradigm" that we are to "hold to" while "standing firm". (2 Thes. 2:15)
- B) May the knowledge of the Grace of God that has appeared and will soon appear again, hold you firmly between His hands; reassure you that you are His and He is yours, and keep you standing upright, shining as a prophetic star in these last and darkening days.**