

Well, let's take out Bibles and turn to Titus, Titus chapter 2. We're going to read all of the chapter together, although we're really only looking at verse 11 through 14. I want to speak this morning on the subject back to school, because we're going to learn here in our series on God's grace, which we're wrapping up today that the grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly pleasures and to live soberly, righteously and godly. We need to go back to school in terms of learning what grace wants to do in our lives, so stand in honor of God's Word. Titus chapter 2, verses 11 through 14, but we'll read all of the chapter. Paul's writing to Titus on the isle of Crete in the Mediterranean.

"But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

"Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort bond servants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you."

You may be seated. As I said, I want to speak this morning on back to school. It's in our series Total Grace, Titus 2, verse 11 through 14. Growing up, I was never very good in English grammar. I kind of still struggle to some degree with it. When I was at Rathcoole Secondary School, I wasn't very proficient in English Composition or conversation. I didn't always cross my t and dot my i in terms of my grammar. In fact, I remember during one class asking the teacher if I could be excused to go to the restroom. I think I put it like this exactly, "Excuse me, miss. Can I go to the toilet?" She looked at me with the look only an English teacher can give you. She replied, "I don't know, Philip. Can you?" But she said, "You may go if you want to go." At that point, I get up, took the walk of the shame to the door having been dully rebuked as a cultural barbarian. It's not can I; it's may I.

I haven't spoke about bad grammar. I want to talk to you a minute about what Sinclair Ferguson calls bad spiritual grammar. I came across this interesting quote in a book of his on sanctification, Devoted to God. Here's what he says, "Christians often seem to fall back into bad spiritual grammar." Think of a situation in which a child picks up the habit of saying me and John played football. You generally correct him. In English, we say John and I. So they reply, "Okay, John and i played football." But three days later, they relapse. They talk about me and John playing football. As believers, we can also relapse into a misuse of gospel grammar, falling back into this night native tendency to turn the gospel on its head as though justification is by grace but the Christian life is essentially a form of self help.

It is therefore vital to see that in Paul's gospel, both justification and sanctification are rooted in the mercies of God. It's a good challenge. We need to watch out for bad spiritual grammar. That thought is the gateway into our text here Titus 2 verse 11 through 14, because in this series on total grace, have we not reminded ourselves often that grace is not just the way into the Christian life. It's the way on in the Christian life. At no point, at no point in the Christian experience does it become a matter of self effort or self help. The grace of God that saves is the grace of God that will keep us is the grace of God that will change us is the grace of God that will equip is under every good work. It's the grace of God that will land us in heaven itself.

Didn't Paul say in 1 Corinthians verse 10, "I am what I am by the grace of God. Whatever you see me doing, it's the grace of God doing it in me?" He also says in 2 Corinthians in verse 9 that God will make all grace abound to us in all things so that we might do an abundance of good works. It is grace that will produce those good works. Grace isn't a push at the top of the hill, and you're off on your own after that. When we lived in Ohio in Toledo, every Christmas, the snow would come. If it was a good snow day, we'd get the girls in our sled and we would go around to a local high school, which had a wonderful hill, not too small, not too big. It was long, and half the neighborhood would be there. There you would be at the top of the hill. Your girls and your boys would get onto their sled, and all you'd hear would be what? "Daddy, give us a push. Daddy, give us a push."

You and I need to understand that grace is not that. It's not God giving us a push at the top of the hill, and then we take it from there. No, the Christian life is a matter of total grace. Then we see that in Ephesians 2. "It's grace that redeems us from sin and damnation." Then we see that in 2 Corinthians 12. "It is grace that sustains us in the midst of trials." Then we see that in Hebrew 4, that it is grace that fortifies us in the face of temptation. Then we see that in Romans 12 where it is grace that equips us for kingdom usefulness. Then we see that in 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9 where it is grace that motivates our giving. Then we see that in Colossians 3 where it is grace that inspires our worship and singing. Then we see that in Colossians 4 where it is grace that helps us be a better witness and speak the word of the gospel in evangelism. It's total grace.

Today in our final sermon in this series, we're gonna see that grace teaches us holiness of life. This is what I'm calling schooling grace, the grace of God will teach us. We've looked at saving, serving, sacrificing, suffering, singing, speaking, strengthening grace. Now we're looking at schooling grace. You see, the grace of God will not only save us. It will sanctify us. It will transform our life. The effect of grace is very clear for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men and that grace will train you, teach you to say no to ungodliness and worldliness and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Grace is not given that sin may abound. Grace is given that godliness may increase.

Jude 4 warns us that there are some who turn God's grace into an excuse for lewdness or lasciviousness or sin. Paul kind of addresses that, doesn't he, this idea of false grace. Well, God is gracious. God forgives, so it doesn't matter that you sin, because there's forgiveness for your sin. Paul says in Romans 5:20 through to chapter 6, verse 2, "Do we sin that grace might abound?" What does he say? God forbid. No way, Jose. That's just not right. God's grace not only saves us. It sanctifies us. You can come to Jesus just as you are. Just as I am without one plea. But you will not stay the way you are when God's grace saves you. You will start to become holy, separated from the world. You will obey God's commands. You will keep in step with the spirit. Grace is power not just pardon.

I like what John Calvin said, "Grace does not grant permission to live in the flesh. It supplies power to live in the spirit." It's a good word. We've got to avoid cheap grace. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Cheap grace is

the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance. Baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ." See, cheap grace justifies sin. It excuses sin. Real grace justifies the sinner and leads to a turning from that sin that cost Jesus His life in the cross.

Let's come and look at this idea of schooling grace and we find out in Titus chapter 2, verse 11 through 14. I want you to notice since we put the text into its context that our section, our [inaudible 00:10:39] begins with the conjunction for or because. It's tied to the verses that go before and in the verses that go before older women are instructed to live in such a manner and they're to instruct younger women to live in a particular manner. And older men are told to teach younger men to live in a certain manner. And bond servants or slaves are told that they are to live in a way that pleases their masters. They're not to steal. They're to be faithful and good in their works, so they may adorn or beautify God's doctrine.

What we have in our passage is motivation to do that, motivation to do that for. Because why should older women teach younger women? Why should older men teach younger men? Why should young women listen to older women? Why should young men listen to older men? Why should slaves serve their masters with integrity? Because grace teaches you to do that, the grace that appeared, bringing salvation to all men teaches you to do that. Interestingly, in this letter, we're gonna study this letter in a couple of months. You're going to see that Paul kind of does things back to front in Romans or in Ephesians or in Colossians. He tends to give us the gospel. He tends to give us doctrine then duty. But here he lists duty and then gives the doctrine, the reasons why you and I ought to behave in a certain manner.

Let's come and look at this passage. There's three things I want us to see, grace inspired leaving, grace inspired living, grace inspired looking. Jump right in, grace inspired leaving. This is verses 11 and 12. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly." In coming after Christ, having come to Christ, this text teaches us we're not only gonna deny ourselves as Jesus teaches and take up our cross. We're gonna deny the lifestyle that marked us before we were saved. That's what we're being taught here, the grace of God that appears, the epiphany of Jesus Christ at His first coming when He comes to die for sinners and provides salvation for those who will trust in Him, not grace that has appeared to all men. When it saves a man or saves a woman, it will change them. They will leave the prior lifestyle behind.

Elsewhere, Paul says ... I think it's 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man in Christ, he's a new creature and old things pass away." Grace will teach us to say no to the ungodliness that marker our lives and the worldly desires, the appetites that we satisfied outside the will of God. I want you to notice the counter play. Grace has appeared, and the consequence is certain things will disappear in your life. When grace appears in a life, certain things disappear like ungodliness and worldly passions. Let's unpack this. Let's just take that first phrase, for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. That word appeared is a beautiful word. It's a Greek word that gives us the word epiphany or dawn. It's the shining of a great light. It speaks of Jesus, the light of the world entering into the darkness.

But I want you to notice the emphasis is not on who but what. Those two things are inseparable, but the emphasis is on what appeared when Jesus appeared. Grace appeared. What is grace? William Hendriksen I think has got a great definition. "God's grace is His active favor, bestowing the greatest gift upon those who deserve the greatest punishment." Amen? That grace has appeared to all men, all kinds of people, all categories of people, because Paul has divided people up into categories. There's men and

women in verses 1 through 10. There's old and young in verses 1 through 10. There's master and slaves in verses 1 through 10. Jesus Christ has come to provide salvation for all categories of people, all kinds of people.

Here's the point I want us to get just before I move on. Do you notice that from Christianity's point of view, it is God who reaches down to us rather than us reaching up to Him. Amen? See, religion teaches us that we can connect with God by reaching up to Him through doing good and being good, keeping the golden rule. But the Bible says, "No, salvation doesn't come by us reaching up to God in self effort, pleading our case based on what we are doing where we're maybe doing more good than bad. Maybe that cancels out the bad." No. If you're gonna be saved, it's gonna be by the grace of God alone. It's God reaching down to you. It's God providing salvation for you in the death of His Son. "For God so loved the world, He gave." It's what God did, not what we do that will be the basis of our acceptance before God.

In fact, in chapter 3 verse 5, what do we read? Actually back up into verse 4, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to His mercy, He saved us." Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to the cross I cling. I have no argument. I have no plea. It is enough that Jesus died, and Jesus died for me. That's what Christians say. Christians understand that salvation comes not by man reaching up to God but by God reaching down to man. Religion is manmade. Christianity is heaven sent. Salvation in other religions is earned by being good or living a certain way. In Christianity, salvation is by grace. It's what Jesus did.

That why I like the quote by Oz Guinness. "We cannot find God without God. We cannot reach God without God. The secret of the quest lies not in our brilliance but in His grace." My friend, if you're not saved today, if you don't know Jesus Christ, in a flash you can be saved today by acknowledging your sin, laying down every hope that that sin can be covered through self effort, law keeping and recognize that God did it all. That's why we sing that old hymn. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow. Oh the grace of God. You can never satisfy a holy God, but a holy God has satisfied Himself. Put your faith where God has put your sin.

But let's move on. This grace that is appeared to all kinds of people, every category imaginable, this grace that brings salvation also teaches us who have come to know that salvation that we ought to say no. This Greek word is a word that speaks about training a child. It give us our word pedagogue. This is the picture of a parent. Paul could have used the word, [foreign language 00:18:26], which speaks of instructing in a classroom, but I don't think that would carry what he wants. Because you can go to the community college at 7:00 on a Tuesday night and [inaudible 00:18:36] you're done with your instruction, but a parent's never done instructing. It's a 24/7 assignment. Plus, it fits Paul's analogy better. One of the things the Christian needs to hear is no. We all know as Christians early on in our children's lives, that's one of our favorite words, no.

Our little granddaughter just turned one, is now walking, so she's exploring, which is dangerous. Getting in all kinds of mischief, and we're finding for the first time in quite a while, we're all saying, "No!" She looks over her shoulder to see what she can get away with. "No, that's the picture." Paul's saying, "Hey, now you're in the family. The grace of God's gonna say no to your old lifestyle." You know what? We need to hear that in a world that says no to nothing. But you see, we're different. We're God's own special people. We work off a different skip. We walk to a different drum beat. We march out of step with the crowd. We're God's own people, who He wants to redeem from every lawless deed. In a world that says no to nothing, you can live whatever way you want, you can believe whatever way you want,

it's okay, in that world that says no to nothing is a band of people called Christians who say no to certain beliefs and behaviors, because they're outside the will of God.

That's why old Spurgeon said, "Better you learn to say no, for it will do you more use than learning Latin." Every time someone asks me to do a PhD, I go, "Hey, Spurgeon said better to learn to say no than Latin," because that's usually one of the qualifying courses. But all jokes aside, we need to learn to say no in a world that says no to nothing. The grace of God will teach us that. Notice the two things we're to say no to. Number one, ungodliness. Number two, worldly passions. Let me just unpack these quickly.

Ungodliness. That means a life devoid of God, at it's essence, a life without reference to God, a life that doesn't acknowledge God as Creator, Authority, Law Giver, a life if acknowledges the presence of God will not thank Him or acknowledge Him. That's ungodliness. In it's blatant forms, it's murder, theft, adultery, anything that clearly violates the moral law of God. But in it's subtle forms, it can be prayerlessness. What is prayerlessness? It's godlessness. It's acting as if you don't need God. Arrogant planning, James 4, where you plan out your future, but you never put in there if God wills. That's godlessness. Missing Sunday worship where God has commanded His people to gather on the Lord's day to celebrate His Son's death and resurrection, stir one another up on love and good works. No, you've got more important things to do, more important people to see than God Himself in the assembly of the saints. That's all godlessness.

There's blatant godlessness and there subtle godlessness. We're told here to say no to it all. In fact, just to kind of make my point, when you go to Romans chapter 1, verse 18 to 32, you've got a list of blatant things that are godless. When we describe man in that passage, he's immoral. He's dishonest. He's cruel. He's evil. He's debase in his sexual behavior so on and so forth. In that sense, ungodliness is very blatant and seen in very stark terms. But what lies beneath it? This is the subtle ungodliness. Although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor give thanks to Him. That's ungodliness at its heart. It will show itself in different ways, both blatantly and subtly, but at its heart, that's what ungodliness is. It is not recognizing God. It is not glorifying Him in your life. It is not giving thanks for that He is and does.

In fact, just recently June and I encountered ungodliness in a very strange place, the Kennedy Space Center. That day, we were in one of their IMAX theaters. We watched this movie about he world. It was beautiful, both from earth and from outer space. You saw the beauty, the vastness, the complexity, the order of the universe. Now, the movie was narrated by the Hollywood actress Jennifer Lawrence. You had your typical green theme, like get rid of your straws. You're destroying the planet. But somewhere in there towards the end of the movie, she kind of draws this idea out and asks this question, because you've just seen the beauty, the vastness, the complexity of the universe, and here's how she kind of ends the movie towards the end. Here's what she says, "Doesn't it make you wonder if there's another planet like us and people like us?"

In my heart, I said, "No, Jennifer. No. It makes me wonder what the Creator is like, how glorious He must be given the vastness, beauty, and order of the universe." I want to tell you, that was godlessness. That was looking at the whole creation and what do we take from that? Is there anybody like us? Sad. That's subtle ungodliness. Develop that discernment. You might sit and listen. Go ahead. They wonder if there's another planet where people look like us. You missed the whole point. She just did what Romans 1 tells they do. They neither acknowledge or glorify the Creator. We're to turn from that. Grace tells us to say no to that.

The next thing is worldly lusts or passions or desires. 1 Peter 2:11 tells us you have certain desires that war against the spirit. What might those desires be? Uncontrolled speech, immoral sexual fantasies, unrighteous anger, selfish ambition. It could be a legitimate desire that is filled in a non legitimate way or it could be just a non legitimate desire from the get go. Any of that ends up being something you need to say no to. It speaks of an inordinate, preoccupation with material tastes, things, toys, thrills, being preoccupied with life in an inordinate manner where God gets pushed to the side, where His kingdom is not first and His will is not in the driving seat. The grace of God will teach us to say no to that.

I think it's important you remember that it's the grace of God that will teach you to say no to that. It's the grace of God that will help you to say no to that, because there are things we must say no to. But how can we say no to them and stick to it? Because you and I have gotten to that place, "I don't want to do that. I'm not gonna do that." But we do it. Not we have tried to avoid it in self effort. We try to tell ourselves if we get caught, this is the consequence. We might try and sell this as a breaking of God's law. We might even share that with an accountability group. All those things are good, but I want to tell you first and foremost, the fear of getting caught, the law of God, or even accountability will not keep you from sin. Only grace will do that. Only grace can empower you to say no, because Jesus can help you do all things through His strength.

Victory over sin isn't a matter of what I do, but what Jesus can do in my dependence upon Him. Our self efforts to live a godly life must be grounded in grace. It's grace alone that can break the cycle of sin in our lives. Jesus, we read in verse 14, died to redeem us from every lawless deed and purify Himself a people that are special to Him. Jesus will do that. Meditating on the cross, depending on the Spirit, reveling in the grace of God, drawing upon grace in the face of temptation, Hebrews 4, will do that.

We've got to cooperate with the grace of God. We don't deserve it. It's given to us, but we must certainly cooperate with it. "What God works in, we work out." Philippians 2:12-13. We've got to listen to our teacher and cooperate with our teacher. We've got to submit, participate, engage actively in the life of grace. Only the teacher will get taught, only the participants win, only those who give receive. This is active for the grace of God that brings salvation and is now in work in you, telling you to not do that will also give you the power to do that. We've got to cooperate with the grace of God, seek it. The means of grace, prayer, Bible study, gospel meditation. We've got to work with grace, not against it. It's still a debate in our home how it happened.

[inaudible 00:27:57] June had a car accident in a car wash. Go figure. I'm talking about the car wash on [inaudible 00:28:05] Rapids, which is an automatic car wash, which makes the story even worse. That's that one where you drive up. The guy tells you to put your wheels on the conveyor belt, brake, put your car into neutral, the thing does the rest of it. Somehow, my wife reversed into a Honda Accord on the car wash. I asked her, "How did you do that?" She says, "I don't know. I can't remember." Really? She doesn't know how she did it. Well, I know how she did it. She put her car in reverse somewhere. I don't know if she reached across and bumped it or what. It cost me \$700 to fix that guy's car. We did it out of pocket. I rendezvoused like we were kind of passing on contraband in a car lot somewhere. I said at Target, "Here's your \$700, man. I don't want the insurance involved."

I'm gonna tell you something. This is a \$700 illustration you're about to hear. Here's the point I thought about. I said, "I can't waste this. I gotta get an illustration out of this thing." Here it is if I can make this. The grace of God is like that conveyor belt. This thing has got power. It'll clean your car if you cooperate with it. But don't put your car into reverse, whatever you do, because as powerful as it is, you're going in the wrong direction. It's the same with God's grace. God's grace is free. It's unmerited. You can have it

as you seek it by means of grace, but don't put your life in reverse. Don't fight against the grace of God. Don't go against it. Don't turn back from it. That's how you and I stay out of sin.

For the time that remains, secondly, grace inspired living. I'm not sure that worth \$700, but there you go. Grace inspired living, grace not only teaches us to say no, it teaches us to say yes, doesn't it? The grace of God that brings salvation that appears to all men an implication it has appeared to us, and we have received it. Well, that grace that saves you will sanctify you, and it will teach you to deny, say no to ungodliness and worldly lust. It will teach you to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. Why? Because verse 14. That's what Jesus died on the cross. He died to redeem a people for Himself that He might redeem them from every lawless deed, purify Himself His own special people zealous for good works. Grace teaches us to live a life that pleases God, a life that reflects His character, resembles the life of His Son and benefits the world through good works.

Grace is transformational. You can come to Jesus as you are, but if you really meet Jesus, you won't stay as you were, because the grace of God that saves you will start training you to say no to the things that have wrecked your life or wrecking our world and are against God's will. The grace of God will make a really good argument that it is a good thing to delight yourself in the Lord, because He'll give you the desires of your heart, to trust in the Lord and do good, to commit your way to the Lord. I kind of want to back into it quickly. There's three things about this grace inspired life. It's a purchased life, a peculiar life, and a productive life. Not gonna spend a lot of time on the first thought. We're actually going down to verse 14 to come back up to verse 12.

The grace filled life is a purchased life. You'll notice that we are described as a redeemed people. Jesus gave Himself for us. In one sense, Jesus gave Himself for the world, but a particular sense, He gave Himself for us. There was a design to the atonement. The design to the atonement was that God would redeem a people. The Bible calls them the elect. God will redeem that people, that special people. He will purchase them. The word redeem here means to buy at a price. It means to free a slave. Paul's acknowledging you and I were slaves to our sinful nature. Jesus comes along like a man in a slave market and buys us and sets us free. Now, we're not set free to do our own thing. We're set free now to be the person that God created every man to be. That is one who reflects His glory. But just understand you're a redeemed person. You're purchased, you're bought, you're owned, which brings us to the second thought.

The grace filled life not only a purchased life, it's a peculiar life. It's a peculiar life. The reason I went with the word peculiar, because that's how it's translated in the Bible I grew up with. My New King James translates it God's own special people, but if you've got an old King James, it'll say God's peculiar people. I just love that word. I want my English teacher to know I've really improved since she last saw me, you know, peculiar. In fact, that's what it means. It means to belong to. When we hear peculiar, we think strange, right? Boy, he's peculiar. I don't know if the elevator goes the whole way up. He's odd. Peculiar, strange. But that's not the word. In it's original meaning, it's special. It's a peculiar thing, a special thing. We're not only a purchased people. We're a peculiar people. We're God's own special possession. According to verse 14, His own special people.

The thought of belonging to God ought to own us. Just think of that. If we belong to God, we're His children. We're part of His family. We're sheep in his flock. We're soldiers in His army. We're servants in His house. We're sons in His family. The analogies go on. If we belong to God, that ought to own us. How does Paul describe himself in Acts 27, verse 23, speaking of God? "Whose I am and who I serve." Paul got this. I'm owned. You want to know about me? I need to tell you whose I am. I'm not some free

agent. I'm not the master of my own fate or the captain of my own soul. I belong to a special people, a peculiar people. You and I need to let the idea of belonging to God own us. To use the 60s phrase, we are the Jesus people. We are the Jesus people, because He died for us to redeem us from every evil lawless deed to make us His own special people so might do good works.

This is the language of Exodus, the great active redemption in Exodus 19, verse 15. On the other side of that, God says, "And you will be my treasured possession." So, own your peculiarity as a Christian. You are peculiar to the world. You realize that? If you find out that already, if you haven't, you gotta ask yourself why haven't I been tagged peculiar by the culture I'm living because I'm swimming against the tide. I'm driving against the traffic. I do things that they call us peculiar. You actually are still a virgin at 20? That's peculiar, strange, odd. That's what we're talking about here. You and I need to own our peculiarity. Young people, don't be frightened to be thought of as strange, because you're strange to the world but special to God. No stranger to Him. We need to show our peculiarity, the peculiarity of our integrity in a shady world, the peculiarity of our purity in a dirty world, the peculiarity of our convictions in a relativistic world. Don't be frightened of to be thought peculiar in the best sense of that world.

Let me apply this and move on. Several years ago, Jen and I were in Sydney, Australia, catching up with some friends. We made a stop there for two days, then we were to fly on to Perth where I was to speak at [inaudible 00:36:27] in the western part of Australia. We were with Stan and Mary, long necker who come to our church. We were walking down a major [pavement in Sydney on our way, actually, to a lunch Bible study by Philip Jensen and in of the great Anglican churches. All of a sudden I noticed on the other side of the road, a man just stopped, got down on his knees and started praying. People nearly tripped over the guy. Then they started literally almost stepping over him. I'm talking about like imagine a major street in New York. That's the kind it was. Hundreds and hundreds of people, all right? All of a sudden, this guy get down on all his fours. Before long, I realized he was a Muslim, because he turned his body I'm guessing to face Mecca. They do it five times a day.

Now, you can tell people's looking at this. This is a strange sight. This guy's peculiar. But you know what? To his credit, he didn't care. I frankly was challenged by that. On one hand, I was saddened that he was praying to a false idea about God. But on another hand, that's guts. He doesn't care about being thought of as peculiar, neither should I as a Christian. Own your peculiarity, because you belong to God, because ours is a purchased life. Ours is a peculiar life. Ours is a productive life, because we read in verse 14 Jesus redeemed us, saved us to purify us His own peculiar special people, zealous for good works. You might have an NIV. It translates it eager for good works. That's not strong enough. That's not strong enough. Eager and zealotry are two different things. You can be eager but not a zealot. But you have met zealots, political zealots, sports zealots, ideological zealots. For them, it's a life or death thing. That's zealotry. That's our word. Eager doesn't do it.

What we have here is a call for God's own special people redeemed and bought. They are to set their hearts. They are to consecrate themselves to a life that is good. In fact, you see this, don't you, in chapter 2. The older women are to teach the younger women good things, verse 3. You see here in verse 7 that men are to be a pattern of good works. We read in verse 10 that slaves are not to steal from their masters but to show all good fidelity. These are the good works that are being talked about in verse 14, which would bring us back up to verse 12, because you and I are to live a life marked by good works, righteousness, right behavior. That means living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

Soberly. I think that's to do with us, lives that are in proper focus. Sober carries the idea of a mind not clouded by alcohol, a mind that's not fuzzy. If you're to live soberly, you're gonna have the right perspective in life. Your head's gonna be screwed on. You're gonna know what's what, the right and wrong, the right thing to do. Righteously, I think relates to others, to act justly towards others and rightly towards others, to live a life of radiant righteousness before others. Godly, I think, is before God. Once we lived godless lives, but now we live godly lives. We relate everything to God. This is all done against the backdrop of this present age. What is this present age? Well, it lies in the lap of the wicked one. It's an age marked by fleeting experiences because they're fashion or the form of this world is passing away. It's an age marked by wickedness where men are marked by the lust of the eye and the pride of life. That's the present age we live in.

But the church is the counterculture. We're driving against the traffic. We're happy to just stop in the middle of life and worship God and let people do what they do regardless. There's a headstone in England about a particular person who lived during the time of Cromwell and the vesting of the English throne. They were Anglican in conviction, so they were in the corner with Charles I. The inscription can be found in Harold Church Staunton, England. It reads like this, "In the year 1652 when all things sacred were throughout the nation destroyed and profaned, this church was built to the glory of God by Sir Robert Shirley, whose singular praise was to have done the best of things in the worst of times." That would make a great headstone, wouldn't it? That's what it was. Make a great epitaph for anyone of us. In the worst of times, they did the best of things. They were zealous for good works, living soberly, righteously and godly in this present wicked world.

It brings us to our last thought, grace inspired looking. Have you noticed that grace teaches us what to leave, how to live, and now where to look? Look at verse 13, "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Christ has appeared once, bringing salvation to the world. The Christ who's appeared once in grace will appear a second time in glory, in power and glory. First time, He was humiliated. Second time, He'll be honored. This is a glorious appearing. His self emptying. His [inaudible 00:42:34] is over. The glory which He had before He came is His again. That glory some day will be manifest among the nations. That's our hope. That's what we're looking for. That's what we're waiting for, that day when Christ will be vindicated and we will be vindicated with Him, grace inspired looking.

John [Stadocks 00:42:55], he has a helpful little analogy. He says he borrowed this from someone. We've got two appearing, right, the first appearing and the second appearing. One is a western window and the other is an eastern window. Here we are living in between the first and second coming of Jesus. We are to live righteously, soberly, godly. We can do that by looking back at the cross and what Jesus did. He intended to redeem us from every lawless deed, and we can look forward to the coming that indeed we will give an account for our lives at the judgment seat of Christ. If we live that life that pleases God, we will be vindicated before the nations. Those are motivations, looking back and looking forward.

As we do that, we wait actively. The waiting here or the looking is not passive. It's not the kind of waiting that motorists do on the 91 freeway on a Thursday night. No, it's the kind of waiting a mother does late at night as she looks at the clock again and again and again from her child to return home from a friend's house. It's that kind of energetic, active looking. Are you looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ? I don't have time to develop this, but here's a little light line from you to think about. How can you promote this anticipation? Number one, by seeking the Scriptures. What about Revelation 1:3? "Blessed is he who reads this prophecy." You know, there's a trend today among young people and in the church in general, I don't need to know about prophecy. I

have no interest in prophecy. Wrong. How are you gonna anticipate the blessed hope if you don't know what the blessed hope is? Search the Scriptures.

Not only by seeking the Scriptures, but two, by seeking the saints, being in the company of people who also are anticipating the Savior's return so then in your small group or in your conversations, the thought of Jesus' return is coming up. Hebrews 10:24-25, "Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together such as the manner of some is, but stir one another up on the love and good works, so much the more ..." What? "As you see the day approaching." Our small groups and our Bible studies should have conversations pretty regularly about the fact that Jesus is coming and coming soon. What do the Christians say to each other? [foreign language 00:45:20] What does it mean? The Lord comes. We are to greet each other in the Lord's day. [foreign language 00:45:25]. The Lord comes, because it keeps you focused. The grace of God that has appeared is going to reappear.

By searching the Scriptures, by seeking the saints, by studying the signs. Matthew 24, we're told of things that will lead up to Jesus coming. Jesus says in Luke I think, "When you see these things become the past, lift up your eyes." Finally by scanning the sky. When's the last time you literally or I scanned the sky? Because the Lord will descend with a shout with the voice of the archangel with the trumpet of God. Are you scanning the sky for Jesus to come? Do you ever close your blinds at night, look out in the evening sky and wonder perhaps tonight? Do you ever pull them back in the morning and say, "Perhaps today?" That's the way the saints of old lived.

As the team comes up, let me quote A.W. Tozer, "Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the blessed hope. It is imperative that we stay fully alert to the times in which we live. All signs today point to this being the season of the blessed hope. All around us, we have the evidence of Jesus in return. Each day, our focus should be on the coming One. Our focus on the blessed hope is the most important discipline of our Christian life. Look out the west window and see that Jesus has come and He died to redeem the people from every lawless deed. Look out the east window and see that Jesus is coming to complete that work. As you and I live in the in between time, let's say no to ungodliness. Let's say no to worldly pleasure. Let's say yes to sober, righteous, godly living.

When we were in NASA that day, one of the displays we went to was the display about the space shuttle. Found that fascinating and fantastic. In this hangar or display hall, there was a literal space shuttle. There was all kinds of fun things to do. There was a simulator where you get an opportunity to try and land a space shuttle. I think I busted up five or six of them, cost the United States trillions of dollars. But here's the thing on the way end. There was this sign that I wrote down on my phone, because I said that speaks to me. On the way in to the space shuttle display were these words by Carl Sagan, the philosopher, "The sky calls to us."

Remember the day before flight, before the Wright brothers get off the ground or Da Vinci and his contraptions. The sky calls us. Men long for the day when they could fly. The sky calls to us, and in a very real sense, that's true of Christians. Every day we get up, the sky calls to us. The Lord Himself will descend with a shout. Let's live as if Jesus died yesterday, rose today, and is coming back tomorrow.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You for our time in the Word this morning. We pray if someone is here who doesn't know Christ that they would realize that there is a gift that God is wanting to give them free of charge, bought in the blood of Jesus Christ. Help them to realize that it is a foolish attempt to reach up to God when God has already reached down to them and holds out a hand of forgiveness in Christ. May they put their faith in Jesus. For those of us that are saved, help us to have a big picture. Help us to

understand the design and the atonement, the purpose of Jesus' death was to redeem a people, a peculiar people, a people He'll call mine. He wants to change our lives from the inside out. Lord, help us to cooperate with your grace and the means of grace so we can grow.

Help us to put off the old life and put on the new life. Help us to do it in the in between, looking back at the cross and looking forward to the crown. Help us, Lord, to regain the hope of Jesus' return, such a massive doctrine, such a wonderful motivation so little spoken of today. The sky calls to us. Help us to live in the light of that. Help us to love in the light of that. Help us to leave our sin in the light of that for Jesus's sake. Amen.