

21st Century Men of Grace:

“In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works”: Following Christ in a Christless World Titus 2:7

Today as we open to John 10, we are looking at one of the most foundational truths of being born-gain Christians. Jesus made salvation, eternal life, and assurance of eternal security so SIMPLE. He sums EVERYTHING up with these words in v. 27:

John 10:27 (NKJV) **My** sheep hear **My** voice, and **I** know them, and they follow **Me**.

Salvation is so personal: we are His sheep; we can hear His voice; and—the way we know we are His comes from following His voice.

Think of a shepherd who speaks, and of sheep that turn their heads, listen, and then start walking towards him. That is true Christianity!

Following Christ's voice in His Word and thus following Him: that is assurance, that is salvation; and that is all reduced to FOLLOWING Him!

Now as we turn on to Titus 2:7, we come to the second desire God has for every man. If you are a young man, God is asking: “Are you FOLLOWING Me so that your LIFE a PATTERN for others to follow?”

Titus 2 is the plan God had for every person that claimed Christ as Lord and Savior. These choices please Him. All He asks is that we surrender our life to hear and FOLLOW Him. Our responsibility is to be sure we hear Him!

God’s Voice is In His Word

Titus 2:6-7 is God explaining His plan, in His word, asking men to follow Him:

v. 6 “Likewise exhort the **young men**”:

1. “To be sober-minded”: Ask yourself, “Have I chosen to **Live a Restrained Life in an Unrestrained World?**”
2. v. 7 “in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works”: Ask yourself, “Do I want to **Follow Christ In A Christ-less World?**”
3. “In doctrine showing integrity”: Ask yourself, “Have I chosen to **Maintain Godly Purity In An Impure World?**”

4. "Reverence": Ask yourself, "Am I **Keeping A Singular Focus In A Blurred World?**"
5. "Incorruptibility": Ask yourself, "Am I resolved to **Keeping an Uncorroded Life in a Decaying World?** "
6. v. 8 "sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you". (NKJV): Ask yourself, "Am I really **Speaking God's Words In A Godless World?**"

Our spiritual lives are not really at that complex. Life in Christ is actually simple. Paul took Christ's words about the simplicity of following Him. God's voice is His Word; and salvation is following Him. Paul led pagans into turning to God, following Christ, and asking others to follow their example. Salvation was seen as people were:

Turning to Follow His Voice

This week in our Men of the Word 12 x 12 Bible studies, we discussed the incredible account of how the Gospel arrived in Thessalonica: and pagans turned to follow the voice of God through His Word. If you'll join me in I Thessalonians 1 for a moment, look at how God originally presented salvation through His Word.

God's Voice is His Word; and salvation is following Him.

Please stand with me and listen to this incredible account:

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (NKJV) Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our **gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance**, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. 6 **And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word** in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. 9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and **how you turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Pray

In verses 5 and 6 we see the heart of the Gospel. People **received the Word** and a

powerful change took place. They began to have an assurance of their salvation.

For a moment think through exactly what the Lord says about His Word, our hearing His voice, and the impact on our lives. Here we go:

- **Truth-1:** Salvation was described by Jesus when said, My sheep hear My _____ what? [He said they hear My voice] and they know me and follow Me. So salvation comes by receiving God's Word, by hearing Christ's voice, and following Him.
- **Truth-2:** One of the clearest assurances of the genuineness of your faith is whether or not you "hear" Christ's voice as you read His Word each day. The old saying goes: this book will keep you from sin; but sin will keep you from this book. Maybe the reason so many believers struggle with feeling and acting like Christ's followers is that they are not "hearing" His voice in the Bible each day.

So, from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians and from Christ's words in John 10, we can say that being godly, pleasing to God, and becoming a believer that reflects God's Word may be reduced to two simple words:

Following Jesus

Jesus said that eternal life is all about following Him; and He summarized His entire plan for the disciples in just two words: "Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19). Those two words were what He spoke to Peter, Andrew, James and John as they fished and to Matthew as he sat at the tax office (Luke 5:27); and those two words are what He still calls for, as He walks through this world¹.

Are you personally following Jesus today? Does your life revolve around Him: as you start the day with **seeking Him**, as you go through the day **servicing Him**, and end the day with **thanking Him**? Believers are Christ's personal followers in a Christ-less world.

Jesus called Himself the "**Way**"; and described salvation as the beginning a life-long journey of following Him (John 14:6). This call to a life of following needs to at times be renewed as Jesus demonstrated after His resurrection, when Peter was restored to ministry as Jesus again said: "follow" Me (John 21:19).

So Christ's plan was to have close, personal "followers" who were also learners and doers of **His Way**. They listened and followed Him as they learned from Him how to do what He did. Now open with me to Acts 9.

Then book of Acts repeatedly describes the early believers as those who were "followers" of Christ Jesus, the Way:

¹ Back in John 10, remember what Jesus explained as He taught: that His disciples were those who heard His voice, became His sheep, and "followed" Him (John 10:27). Jesus called those followers His disciples or "learners". The Gospels are a record of how disciples spent time with Jesus for over 3 years watching, listening, and most of all "following" Him.

- Acts 9:2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were **of the Way**, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. NKJV
- Acts 18:25-26 This man had been instructed in **the way of the Lord**; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him **the way of God** more accurately. NKJV
- Acts 19:9, 23 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of **the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about **the Way**. NKJV
- Acts 22:4 "I persecuted this **Way** to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, NKJV
- Acts 24:14, 22 "But this I confess to you, that according to **the Way** which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of **the Way**, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." NKJV

The Church at the beginning was simple, everyone was following Jesus, acting so much like Him they were described by unbelievers as little-Christ-imitators or "CHRIST-ians". As the church gathered, they were taught that every facet of their lives were to be reflective of what they learned while following Jesus personally. Christian nurture is:

Learning to Follow By Example

This "learning and doing by example" model was the key to Titus 2 discipleship; Paul described a plan for having each person in Christ's Church actually involved in a life-long learning process of following Jesus Christ. In fact, believers are called little imitations or "mimics" of Jesus Christ. The Greek word in the Epistles that describes those who "follow" and are "followers" is **mimetes** (literally "mimics").

Listen to the clear call we have all been given by Christ's Apostles to follow or "mimic" Christ:

- 1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you, **imitate** me. NKJV
- 1 Corinthians 11:1 **Imitate** me, just as I also **imitate** Christ. NKJV [That is the clearest description of what Titus 2 discipleship is all about!]

- *Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be **imitators** of God as dear children. NKJV*
- *1 Thessalonians 1:6 And you became **followers** of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, NKJV*
- *1 Thessalonians 2:14 For you, brethren, became **imitators** of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, NKJV*
- *2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 For you yourselves know how you ought to **follow** us, for we were not disorderly among you; 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should **follow** us. NKJV*
- *Hebrews 6:12 that you do not become sluggish, but **imitate** those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. NKJV*
- *Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith **follow**, considering the outcome of their conduct. NKJV*
- *3 John 11 Beloved, do not **imitate** what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. NKJV*

Today, God is looking for those who will not merely hear God's Word, study God's Word, memorize God's Word, master the content of God's Word—He wants those men and women, and boys and girls who will follow Christ.

The Loss of Modeling

Have you noticed how far away from Christ's model we've come?

In Christ's day and His Apostles, the Church was a community of believers who followed Christ.

But, as the Church moved deeper into the Greek culture it slowly became more of a philosophy, and less of a community living out truth;

Within a few centuries as the Church moved to Rome and became more of a building than a body;

And after a few more centuries, as the Church permeated Europe, it became more a culture than a community;

And finally today, the Church in America is more of a business, and less of a band of devoted followers of Jesus Christ who live out Christ's Way in every day life.

Oh how we need to return to being disciples, followers, close-knit brothers and sisters

imitating Christ and nurturing each other.

And that takes us right back to the heart of Paul's message in Titus 2:7.

in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,

Paul's plea was for Titus to personally live the truth and not just teach it, train it, study it, or discuss it! Paul instructed Titus himself to set the pace, with a very personal appeal.

1. **Total Consecration:** "in all things"; Titus was not to allow himself to give in to Satan's lie called "Compartmentalization" where he would have a public life, a private life, a business life, a personal life—each with a differing degree of Christ's Lordship. No, Jesus wants all of us. He wants to shine into every part of our lives. No locking Him out of an area that we say has nothing to do with Him. Christ has everything to do with all of our lives. Secondly,
2. **Personal Implementation:** "showing yourself"; Titus was called to a life of integrity, no hypocrisy was allowed. He could not teach one thing, and live another. Rather, he was to hold out to all who would look, a life lived in integrity.
3. **Visible Demonstration:** "to be a pattern of good works"; Titus was to be living his life going against the flow. He was to actively resist the bad works of the world by making constant choices to DO good works. The Devil wants believers to become passive and just drift along with the flow of the world instead of actively confronting the darkness with light, the evil with good, the selfishness with self-sacrifice—and all of these things as an imitation of Christ!

That is the essence of this next point about grace-energized men, they were men who sought to **Become Followers of Christ in A Christ-less World**. But the question we always face is—How?

The Model is Listening to And Following Christ

So the model is to follow the One whose voice we hear.

Jesus said hear My voice and follow Me.

Which leads me to ask each young man, young person, and really everyone to ponder, "What or who are you listening to and following?"

Have you noticed as you look around, watch the news, and reflect on where society is headed, that there is a shameless and immoral behavior that is becoming normal in our

world? Sociologists are waking up and asking, why is this happening. Here is a recent article from a paper in Philadelphia:

Recently² a report issued by the Queensland State Department of Education and Training in Australia observed that last year the number of disciplinary actions in schools across that state increased by 6 percent compared to 2008, and 20 percent compared to 2006.

"Queensland Teachers Union president Steve Ryan said the level of violence in schools was escalating in line with society. 'Schools in many respects mirror what's happening in society and we've seen an increase in anti-social behavior in society,' he said. 'It's escalating enormously in society, and schools have to deal with it as well'" (Brisbane Times, June 29).

So why is violence escalating in society?

In the New Testament Jesus told His culture and ours that what we do flows from what is in our hearts: Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34, NKJV).

Follow God or Follow Sin

In the Old Testament God warned His people Israel of the dangers of ignoring Him: "Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart...therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you... and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you." (Deuteronomy 28:47-48, NKJV).

The Bible says that the more that we as humans ignore and neglect God's truth, the further away from Him we slide, and the more eroded human society shamelessly becomes. Now back to the article I was reading:

Is it just by happenstance that in times when music was tuneful, upbeat, in sync with the body's natural rhythms, that society reflected far less tendency for violence? Is there any connection between the music of such a genre and the more elegant style of dress, more careful attention to language, greater degree of manners and sense of shame for wrongdoing that prevailed at the time when such music was fashionable?

Is there not a similar connection between today's pop "music" and the grungy dress, sloppy, single-syllable, short-form lingo, shabby manners and general shamelessness that runs in parallel with it?

If you read cultural historians who do not believe God's Word you find them coming to near Biblical conclusions. That is what we see:

² **What's in Your Ear?** July 5, 2010, "How today's music reflects the denigration of society" By Ron Fraser. This article is from a cult website but does express truths we can use to illustrate God's Word. <http://www.thetrumpet.com/index.php?q=7318.5868.0.0>

*In his masterful work *The Closing of the American Mind*, Prof. Alan Bloom [(1930-1992) a liberal Jewish professor at the University of Chicago] noted over 20 years ago the phenomenon that:*

"Today, a very large proportion of young people between the ages of 10 and 20 live for music. It is their passion. Nothing else excites them as it does; they cannot take seriously anything alien to music." Bloom observed that when forcefully distracted by family, school or work commitments, "they are longing to plug themselves back into music [I]t is available 24 hours a day, everywhere."

And what are these impulsive, immature, inexperienced young minds plugging themselves into? "Young people know that rock has the beat of sexual intercourse [R]ock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire—sexual desire undeveloped and untutored" (ibid.).

When one adds illicit drugs or alcohol to this, the resultant cocktail percolating in a young person's mind is lethal—spiritually, morally, behaviorally, intellectually, socially lethal.

Real music, that which obeys the immutable laws of God, can be a wonderfully enriching part of life. It can sooth in moments of stress, calm the vexed, add sheer delight to romance, uplift to the heights the spirit in man. At its very peak it expresses glory and praise to the one who created man to benefit from it.

Follow Christ in a Christ-less World

God desires young men to follow Christ.

Make sure what you are listening to shows that more than anything else: you are hearing and following Jesus Christ. One of the clearest assurances of faith is whether or not you "hear" Christ's voice as you read His Word each day.

Maybe the reason so many believers struggle with feeling and acting like Christ's followers is that they are not "hearing" His voice in the Bible each day.

The old saying goes: this book will keep you from sin; but sin will keep you from this book. Is there sin that is distracting you from hearing His voice in His Word?