

## *Antinomianism: What Will Stop It?*

*The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, 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 (Tit. 2:11-14).*

I wish to speak to you for a few minutes on Titus chapter 2 and verse 12; Titus chapter 2 and verse 12. Paul writes to Titus and says this – well, go back – from verse 11: 'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope'; and so on.

It is these words I want to concentrate on, though: 'It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age'.

'Us', 'us'. The apostle is speaking about himself and Titus, and, of course, in this connection, he's writing to Titus to encourage him, to instruct him, to nerve him, and to stir him, for his ministry and his work – the commission he has given him to carry out leaving him in Crete. For Paul is saying here that we need to see the believers at Crete – believers everywhere – we need to see believers saying 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and we need to see these believers living positive lives to the glory of God, practical in godliness and spirituality.

And, of course, it's not just in the apostle's day. It's true for us today! I, as a believer – you, if you're a believer, listening to me – one who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ; you have a living faith in him, you've passed from death to life, you are justified, you're your right with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, then, we have now to live as new creatures: 'If any man is in Christ Jesus he is a new creation. Behold, old things are

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passed away. Behold, all things are become new!’ We live a life to the glory of God. Now what will teach us? What will instruct us? What will nerve us? What will stir us? What will move us? What will motivate us to this godly life? The negative: to say ‘No’ to ungodliness, worldliness, pagan-living, hedonism, living for self, pleasure, living for lusts. And positively: to live controlled, upright, godly, spiritual lives in this present age, this ungodly age, this worldly age in which we live, this Satanic-dominated, Satan-dominated age, the blindness, the ignorance, the darkness all around us? How can we live as lights shining in this present evil age, waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ to come again – saying ‘No’ to what world offers us, and saying ‘Yes’ to all God demands of us in his word?

What will move us to it? What does Paul say to Titus? What does he say he wants him to preach – as he says in verse 15: ‘These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you’. ‘Titus: this is what I want you to preach! This is what I want you to understand, first of all! This is what I want you to know for yourself, first of all! First and foremost, before you ever try to teach anybody else, learn it for yourself! What will enable you to stand out from this present evil age and live for the glory of God?’

Well, this is a vital question. We know that for all who are right with God – justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – God has created good works for us to live and do in this present evil age. We have to live to the glory of God. We can’t be antinomians. We can’t be lawless, and libertines, and live like the world. What’s going to teach us to say ‘No’ to the world, and say ‘Yes’ to God? In short: What is going to make me a sanctified man?

Well, here, as I’ve said on many occasions, there are two systems, if you like, two ways, that are offered to believers. The common, the usual, way is that – and the way that seems by human logic to make sense – is to teach the believers that they are under the law of God, the ten commandments, in particular, the moral law. Live as those who are under this law! Bear in mind the blessings that come from this law; bear in mind the

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curse that come, the punishment that come, from disobeying this law. Rules, regulations, often although it is said ‘the ten commandments’, often other rules and regulations, man-made rules and regulations, are imposed upon believers. But it’s by rule and rote, and ceremony of obedience – conformity, rather – that kind of thing – that we shall produce this kind of saying ‘No’ to ungodliness, and ‘Yes’ to God. Fear is at the bottom of this motive. That’s one way. If you think I’ve made all that up, then you’d better read John Calvin,<sup>1</sup> and see how he called the law a whip to smite us as lazy asses to drive us to godliness. And you’d better listen to modern preaching, where so often it’s: ‘Do these things! Don’t do those things! Do the others!’ And it’s commandment, commandment and commandment; recipe, recipe, recipe!

But I ask you: What does *Paul* say here? What will teach me to say ‘No’ to ungodliness? Is it the law? What will teach me to say ‘Yes’ to God? Is it the law? ‘It is’, says Paul (verse 11), ‘the grace of God that brings salvation that will teach me (verses 11 and 12) to say “No” to ungodliness, and say “Yes” to God’. Do you hear that? The grace of God – the grace of God – will teach me to say ‘No’ to sin, and ‘Yes’ to holiness. The grace of God will teach me to say ‘No’ to the world, and ‘Yes’ to God. The grace of God will teach me to say ‘No’ to what the world’s pundits teach, and to say ‘Yes’ to what the Spirit says in his word.

The grace of God! This is what Titus has to preach. Preach the grace of God! ‘The grace of God’ – it’s often said is the undeserved kindness of God to us. I don’t think it is. I think it’s more than that! I think it’s the kindness of God to me when I deserve the exact opposite of kindness. For, I read in Ephesians 2, that by nature I’m a child of wrath, under the wrath of God, and yet in his love and his mercy, as Paul goes on, in Ephesians 2, to say: ‘But God, who is rich in love, for his great love wherewith he loved us. For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God’.

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<sup>1</sup> See the first chapter of this present work.

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‘Stress this’, Paul says to Titus. Let this sink into your mind! Make sure you make this the principal thing of your preaching: Christ, the grace of God in Christ, the mercy of God in Christ, ‘the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, 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’. Stress these things! Preach these things! Lift up Christ in his sacrifice, in his death, in his blood being shed, in his burial, in his resurrection, his intercession, and his coming again. Preach Christ! Stress the grace of God! And as the believers hear this, and meditate upon it, and feel it, they shall be enabled to say ‘No’ to the world, and ‘Yes’ to God.

Believer! Are you tempted to sin? Of course you are! Then listen! Hear the grace of God! Look to Christ in the grace of God! Think about the mercy that God has showered upon you, and shown to you in Christ!

Believer! Do you have doubts? Of course you do! Then look to the grace of God! Look to Christ! ‘Look full in his wonderful face!’ Is the world attractive to you? ‘Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace’.

Do you lack assurance, believer? Are you low and cast down and depressed? Are you backsliding? Do you want your heart warmed? Then look to Christ! Dwell upon his grace! Think on him and his mercy to you. And let your heart be melted again, as Christ, in his grace, giving himself for your salvation, and as the thought of all this comes into your heart and into your mind, sinks into your soul, and works itself out in your life.

Do you want to be holy? Then think upon Christ and his grace!

Do I address any preachers? Are you a legal preacher, my friend? Are you preaching rules and regulations and laws? There are commandments in the gospel, it is true. There’s commandments all over the New Testament, yes, but coupled with all those commandments you will find this: the mercy of God, the grace of God. This is the motive – always – for sanctification. Give up preaching law *per se*. Preach the gospel,

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my brother. Preach Christ! This will sanctify, edify, confirm, protect, build up the saints.

Is there any unbeliever listening to me? Will you listen to me, my friend? Give up trying to earn your salvation! There is no salvation in 'doing'! There's no salvation in effort and trying! Look to Christ! Trust the grace of God in Christ! It sanctifies the saints, but it will also, in the beginning, save the sinner: 'For by grace are you saved through faith'. Look to Christ, then! Trust him! Turn from your sin, crying out for mercy! Then you, too, will become a child of God, a saint – and, having become a child of God, you will join us then.

And whether we're preaching or hearing – whatever it is – as believers, we shall be continuing to lift up Christ to others – and to ourselves, first of all – looking unto Jesus: trusting, looking, waiting upon, meditating upon, the grace of God in Christ. For the grace of God will teach us to say 'No' to the world, and 'Yes' to God.

