

11-13-16 – Hope for the Future

Titus 2:12-13

In my final year of High School, I was offered an optional course called Introduction to Computing. The computer stood 7 feet tall in the Lab. This was the wave of the future for technology. I was on the cutting edge of a new field in the making. That was 1971. Computers entered the scene. . .

After graduation from college, I landed a job at J.C. Penney Co. in Manhattan in their NY Data Center. Our computer was a main frame IBM that took up a gymnasium sized space to house this monster. However, the future would hold a mind boggling advance in the computer market. Things were growing at a crazy rate and reducing in size. Main frames gave way to Minis, and soon the Personal Computer was introduced by IBM in 1980.

I had no idea what to do with my new PC. It was futuristic in one sense and unnecessary in another. But the future was upon us, and technology was moving at the speed of light, at least, in this industry.

Fast forward only a few years from there, and we are experiencing Future Shock. Computers that took up rooms of space were rendered down to a desktop then a laptop and a smart phone. I have a computer at home called a Raspberry Pi that is about 2” by 3”, has four USB ports, on-board WiFi and an HDMI display interface. I can do anything on it that I can do on my standard workstation computer. I am writing this sermon on the Pi, and only cost \$75. Future Shock at its best.

When I was a kid, Joe Jitsu had a two-way wrist radio to contact Dick Tracy in the comics. Today, Apple has an iWatch to do the same thing with video and all the trimmings. Future Shock is upon us.

In a world that is advancing at the speed of light, what hope do we have for the future? How do we remain secure when everything around us is moving out of control? The young people in our midst may think this is a great advance, but where do we find solace in the midst of advancing technology, etc.

I am the manager of a specialized IT group at BNL, and I can't get my brain around what has happened over the past few years, never mind what's coming down the road.

The world seems out of control. What hope do we have in such a fast paced environment? When everything seems to be moving toward chaos, what do we have to anchor us? This is the situation Titus found himself in on the island of Crete. He was left with the task of finishing Paul's work there to establish the church of Jesus Christ, but the environment was not conducive.

Paul and Titus travelled together on a missionary journey that established the church on Crete, but Paul moved on and left Titus with the task of establishing the church(es) in this area. Paul and Titus knew what kind of people they were dealing with on Crete...

Titus 1:12 - “... *Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.*”

Paul confirmed that these sayings are true. These are the people Titus was left to contend with.

Paul charged Titus to “*straighten out what was unfinished and appoint elders in every town.*” (Titus 1:5)

Paul warns Titus about these people and their attitude. He even tells him that... ***“They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him.”*** (1:15) - These people were imposters and wanted to be part of the establishment of the church of Jesus Christ. What the heck? Titus was left with a can of worms. Yet, this was his task, his calling, his appointed mission from Paul and from God.

A Missionary was sitting at her second-story window when she was handed a letter from home. As she opened the letter, a crisp, new, ten-dollar bill fell out. She was pleasantly surprised, but as she read the letter her eyes were distracted by the movement of a shabbily dressed stranger down below, leaning against a post in front to the building. She couldn't get him off her mind. Thinking that he might be in greater financial stress than she, she slipped the bill into an envelope on which she quickly penned “Don't Despair.” She threw it out the window. The stranger below picked it up, read it, and looked up, and smiled as he tipped his hat and went his way.

The next day she was about to leave the house when a knock came at the door. She found the same shabbily dressed man smiling as he handed her a roll of bills. When she asked what they were for, he replied:

“That's the sixty bucks you won, lady. Don't Despair paid five to one.”

(Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*)

“In the book of Titus, Paul told his troubleshooter, Titus, how to minister to people who were converted from a culture filled with 'liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons' (Titus 1:2)... Titus remained on the island of Crete to get the churches organized and to develop the work. But he struggled to oversee churches filled with people who had grown up without self-discipline.”

(Understanding the 66 Books of the Bible - D. Jeremiah, p. 239)

David continues... *“How do we move from laziness to self-control and spiritual maturity? ... The same grace that brought salvation, teaches us to 'say NO to worldly passions, to deny laziness and lust, and to live soberly and righteously in this world... The message of Titus is: God's work should be well-organized and His workers self-controlled as we go about building His church in the world.”*

(Understanding..., D. Jeremiah, p. 240)

So, first Paul states the qualifications of church leaders. Then he goes on to tell Titus what to say to various groups and the overall church.

Besides the advancement of technology at the speed of light causing concern to many, we have a new president-elect that may add to the mix. As a result these and many other issues we are facing and a future that is unknown and unpredictable, *“many people have given up on the future and have settled into a state of despair.”* (Adventuring Through the Bible, R. Stedman, p. 679).

Paul's letter to Titus offers a powerful antidote to this condition. He calls it **“our blessed hope,”** and it is our Hope for the Future. This hope helps anchor our future and enable us to feel secure.

“Jesus will appear in glory to set right all the things that are wrong in this world.” (Adventuring..., R. Stedman, p. 680).

That's our cure for despair about the future. We are looking toward something better than what appears on the surface. We need not despair like those who have no hope. We may not be able to change the future, but know the promise of God and it is certain.

Paul warns Titus that he is dealing with dishonest, brutish, lazy, and gluttonous people. He explains that this is not just his opinion but spoken of by their own prophets – but he adds... **“This testimony is true.”** This sounds familiar to us today – even in positions of high leadership. There are constantly articles in the papers about officials being indicted for inappropriate behavior and greed. This is what Titus was dealing with when trying to appoint leaders in the churches. He didn't have many people of integrity to choose from.

Titus 1:16 - ***Such people claim they know God, but they deny him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.***

“They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good..”

This is how they were – even among themselves... so Paul warns Titus in 1:9-11...

He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong. For there are many rebellious people who engage in useless talk and deceive others. This is especially true of those who insist on circumcision for salvation. 11 They must be silenced, because they are turning whole families away from the truth by their false teaching. And they do it only for money.

“The purpose of the church is to invade the world with the love of Jesus Christ. When the church is beset with problems, it is usually because the world is invading the church, not because the church is invading the world!”

(Adventuring..., R. Stedman, p. 681)

Paul speaks about and against such behaviors, but he also recognizes the fact that this is how we all were before Christ ...

Titus 3:3 - ***Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.***

SOUND DOCTRINE:

How could Titus make a difference? How could he affect a change in these people's attitudes and character? Only God can change people! So Paul instructs Titus to teach and preach “sound doctrine.” Give them the truth and nothing but the truth. “There are two reasons why people walk around hating one another and tearing each other apart. Either they have rejected the truth, or they have never heard the truth.” So Titus had to focus his energy on teaching them the truth – period. He wasn't expected or asked to get them to accept the truth or to apply it – that's God's work. He was just expected to present it.

GOOD WORKS:

Another basic need is Good Works – This phrase occurs five times in Titus.

- 1:16 – they were unfit for doing anything good
- 2:7 – set an example by doing what is good
- 2:14 – be eager to do what is good

- 3:8 - devote themselves to doing what is good
- 3:14 - learn to devote themselves to doing what is good

The world is watching you and me. We claim to be Christians and we need to show them that we are doing what is Good!

People are the same as ever. We can't change them. We try by various means to change them, but it doesn't work. People are people. It has been said, *"If you bring a pig into the parlor, it won't change the pig, but it will certainly change the parlor."* :-)

True change is not just a change in behavior, it must be a change in who they are. That's where salvation come in. Paul instructs Titus and us to stick with teaching truth that leads to salvation. Then people will be truly changed by God – not us.

Titus 3:3-5 - ***Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. 4 But—***

When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, 5 he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

We sang a song today called, Washed by the Water – This is what it means. We are washed by the water of the Word by the Holy Spirit and we are changed.

Here's the problem - - We look around us and look for a Band-Aid to fix things when we really need a heart transplant. Nothing else will change anything. We have to yield to God, completely.

"We need to be turned inside out and shaken! We need to be completely changed! We need to be saved!" (Adventuring, R. Stedman, p. 683)

This is what the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit is all about. It's a God thing. We can't do this for ourselves or for anyone else. God completely makes us over anew from the inside. This is the Good News – and it is GOOD NEWS. God offers us a cure for despair and hopelessness. He offers HOPE – Hope for now and Hope for the Future!

We are commissioned to spread this Good News to those around us. Do you want to see our church grow? It's not going to happen by a renovation – or chairs or refinished pews – or a paint job. It's only going to happen by prayer and sharing our faith with others in our community. It doesn't matter what we are sitting on. The only thing that matters is that we are here to worship and praise our Holy God and He is here to meet with us! If that's not happening we might as well shut down.

Titus 2:11-13 - ***For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. 12 And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, 13 while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.***

Let's get our act together. We should be waiting for the glorious appearing of Jesus' second coming, not as a means of escape, but as the motivation we need to keep on moving forward in the faith during our troubling times.

We can start with Paul's instructions to Titus in 3:1-2...

“Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. 2 They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.”

We now have the perfect opportunity to put our faith into action. So, let's pray for our country – pray for our new leaders – pray for our church – pray for direction we need to truly follow God more than ourselves – pray for our community and how we can better reach them with the love of God – pray for boldness to share the Good News by the Holy Spirit with others – pray to love and support one another in the faith.

“Our hope is not just the expectation of heaven, but the strength for living in these troubled times.”
(Adventuring..., R. Stedman, p. 685)

Years ago an S-4 submarine was rammed by a ship off the coast of Massachusetts. It sank immediately. The entire crew was trapped in a prison house of death. Every effort was made to rescue the crew, but all ultimately failed. Near the end of the ordeal, a deep-sea diver, who was doing everything in his power to find a way for the crew's release, thought he heard a tapping on the steel wall of the sunken sub. He placed his helmet up against the side of the vessel and he realized it was the Morse Code. He attached himself to the side and he spelled out in his mind the message being tapped from within. It was repeating the same question. The question was, from within, **“Is ... there ... any ... hope?”** (Ben Patterson – *The Grand Essentials*)

Despair will kill – It will kill our nation – It will kill our church – It will kill our community – It will kill our faith. BUT God offers HOPE to defeat despair! Hope for the future! Hope for today! HOPE will keep you alive and striving for the good life in Christ. It's available to all of us if we just believe!

EYE OF THE STORM (words of the chorus)

- You remain in control...
- You guard my soul ...
- You alone are the anchor...
- Your love surrounds me ...

God is in Control – all the time:

- Whoever is President ...
- Whoever is in Congress ...
- No matter what political party ...
- Whatever our Foreign Affairs ...
- Whatever happens with the Stock Market ...
- Whatever comments you read on Facebook ...
- Our future is in His hands because ...