

## Titus 2:11-14: The Logic for Living

*“Steeped in history and culture, scented by wild fennel and basil, Crete welcomes and overwhelms visitors with its wealth of myths, legends and history, a blessed and dramatic landscape, an extraordinary fusion of past and present, and an abundance of choices and experiences.”*



So says the Lonely Planet Guide. But in the mid first century, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the young man Titus who was living on the island of Crete. And it wasn't the fennel and basil that was on Paul's mind. It was the dangers that existed for the young Christian church there. Paul wants to see that in the midst of danger, Titus leads the church well and the people keep on living in a way that is truly Christian.

In this one-off study, we're going to have a broad look at the letter, but we'll end up focusing just on 2:11-14. The big issue we'll have a look at is – how should Christians live and what should be the motivation.

Have a read of Titus 1:1-3:15.

The 'problem people' in Crete that Paul is warning about are mentioned in 1:10-16 and 3:9-11. It's hard to be precise, but what do we learn about these people under the following categories:

Identity	Content of Teaching	Character	Motivation

a) What is Paul's overall instruction in 1:5-9? And how would this counter the falsehood?

b) What is Paul's overall instruction in 2:1-10? And how would this counter the falsehood?

We'll come back to some of this, but let's now focus on 2:11-14 which is a key passage in the entire letter. What makes this section special is that it talks about *why* Christians should live the way they do.

c) What is this grace of God that has appeared? v11 and v14

d) What does God's grace do for us? v11 & v12

e) What do you think it means by - the grace of God teaches us?

This 'grace of God that teaches us' takes us to the heart of why Christian people live the way they do. Have a read of these words to help you to understand:

Living by grace instead of works means you are free from the performance treadmill. It means God has already given you an "A" when you deserved an "F," He has already given you a full day's pay even though you may have worked only one hour. It means you don't have to perform certain spiritual disciplines to earn God's approval. Jesus Christ has already done that for you.

You are loved and accepted by God through the merit of Jesus, and you are blessed by God through the merit of Jesus. Nothing you ever do will cause Him to love you any more or any less. He loved you strictly by His grace given to you through Jesus.

How does this emphasis on God's free and sovereign grace make you feel? Does it make you a little nervous? Does it seem a bit scary to hear that nothing you do will ever make God love you any more or bless you any more? Do you think, *Well, if you take the pressure off like that and tell me all of my effort will never earn me one blessing, then I'm afraid I'll slack off and stop doing the things I need to do to live a disciplined Christian life?*

The Bible recognizes the possibility that the grace of God can be misunderstood and even abused. It speaks of "godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality" (Jude 4).

This type of response is always a possibility but the solution to this problem is not to add legalism to grace. Rather the solution is to be so gripped by the magnificence and boundless generosity of God's grace that we respond out of gratitude rather than out of a sense of duty. It has been said, "The problem isn't that we made the gospel too good. The problem is that we didn't make it good enough."

We have loaded down the gospel of the grace of God in Christ with a lot of "oughts." "I ought to do this," and "I ought to do that." "I ought to be more committed, more disciplined, more obedient." When we think or teach this way, we are substituting duty and obligation for a loving response to God's grace.

Living under the grace of God instead of under a sense of duty frees us to obey God and serve Him as a loving and thankful response to Him for our salvation and for blessings already guaranteed to us by His grace. Consequently, a heartfelt grasp of God's grace – far from creating an indifferent or careless attitude in us – will actually provide us the only motivation that is pleasing to Him. Only when we are thoroughly convinced that the Christian life is entirely of grace are we able to serve Him out of a grateful and loving heart.

Jerry Bridges, Transforming Grace

The motivation for Christian living should not come from fear. It should not come from a desire to perform and keep God’s favour. God utterly loves us and he has shown that in Christ’s death on the cross. Through Jesus’ sacrifice for us, we are made God’s very own (v14). But knowing the grace of God does compel us. The grace of God teaches and trains us the way to go.

f) Discuss any points that come out for you.

Be honest and talk about how seeking to perform and earn favour can play a part in motivating and driving you to live the Christian way.

g) What can we do to keep the perspective on God’s grace?

h) Christians look back to the appearing of grace with Christ’s death for us, but we also look forward to another appearing, v13. What is this appearing and how is this perspective a help for us?

Christian people live with a certain perspective of time. In our lives now – we desire to live good upright lives. This is the ‘present age’ v12. In this age, we look back to when Christ came and died for us (the grace of God that has appeared), but we also look ahead to a new age which will be established when our God and Saviour Jesus appears in glory.

For the Cretan Christians back then and for ourselves today—we all live in the ‘present age’ in which our response to God’s grace to us is to say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and live self-controlled, upright and godly lives. 2:1-10, provides different types of people in which we can think about this in a more personal way. You can pick the category which is right for you! But have a think through and discuss how you can strive (in grace) at being the person God wants you to be. In your thinking and discussion, remember that part of growing in godliness is to say “no” to certain things.

Older men (v2)	Older women (v3-4)	Young women (v4-5)	Young men (v6-8)

## **Prayer**

Spend time giving thanks to God for his grace that appeared – that through Jesus' death we are saved and made to be God's precious possession. Praise God that we have a wonderful future to look forward to when Jesus returns. Pray for those particular areas in which you want to grow in godliness – that with God's grace as the motivation, you would be striving to change and grow to be more like Jesus.