

Introduction:

- A. **One thing I've learned: most of us are bad at waiting.**
That's a problem for Christians because we *have* to wait. God does a lot of important work in us by making us wait. Plus, God is *never* in a hurry. If it were possible, most of us would be honking the car horn, telling God himself to hurry up!
- B. Of all the things God requires us to wait for, the biggest with a capital W, is waiting for Christ to return. There have been some bad waiting stories. Like what historians now call The Great Disappointment. A Baptist preacher named William Miller calculated from Daniel 8 that Jesus was going to return on Oct. 22, 1844. Well, actually that was the date after Jesus didn't come back in 1843. It was a big national story... and a laughingstock. People sold their houses and sat on roofs to wait for Jesus. One disappointed Millerite wrote, "*I waited all Tuesday and dear Jesus did not come; – I waited all the forenoon of Wednesday, and was well in body as I ever was, but after 12 o'clock I began to feel faint, and before dark I needed someone to help me up to my chamber, as my natural strength was leaving me very fast, and I lay prostrate for 2 days without any pain– sick with disappointment.*"
- C. On the other hand, there are plenty of Christians who believe in Jesus' Second Coming but aren't exactly waiting for it. Actually, many almost never think about it. But that's like a bride who almost never thinks about her wedding day. "How many days till the wedding?" you ask. "Oh my goodness," she says, "I don't know. Who has time to think about *that*?"

D. Christians who seldom think of Christ's Second Coming won't be very good Christians. They'll be too earth-bound. There's that old line about someone "being so heavenly minded they're of no earthly good," but it is usually the other way around. Listen to what the Bible says,

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ..." Phil. 3:20

"We, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies." Rom 8:23

Be "like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him." Lk 12:36

E. With that in mind, turn to our text for today, **Titus 2:11-14.**

Titus was a pastor and this is a letter from Paul giving him counsel. This passage has two parts, vv.11-12 and vv.13-14. They pivot on the first phrase of **v.13**, "*while we wait.*" Listen to these verses... [**vv.11-14**]

F. The same word *appears* in both section; the word *appear*. **V.11**, "*For the grace of God has **appeared**...*" **V.13**, "*the **appearing** of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*" The word could be translated *epiphany*, the coming into view of something or someone that has been hidden. [Stott] Both of these are referring to Jesus. The first time Jesus came "*the grace of God **appeared***" in the flesh. God's grace has always been part of his essence but then when Christ came he was **the epiphany of grace.**

There will be a second appearance, also of Christ, but this time the it will be the **epiphany of Christ's glory.**

Now listen once again to **vv.11-12...** The epiphany of grace in Christ has a task to do while we wait for the epiphany of his glory.

I. WHILE WE WAIT, THE GRACE OF CHRIST SCHOOLS US

- A. Christ appearing as Grace in the flesh had two tasks. One was to “*offer salvation to all people.*” Remember Eph. 2:8, “*It is by grace you have been saved, through faith.*” In other words, Jesus offered the undeserved free gift of salvation to all who repented of sin and put their trust in him.

The second task of Grace, according to v.12, is to school us. “*It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*” That’s the kind of people we want to be but *couldn’t* be. Then God gifts us with the grace to be remarkably good people. **We are offered a free education in Christlikeness, along with the gracious empowering of the Holy Spirit.** John Stott wrote, “*Not only does that grace make good works possible but that grace makes them necessary.*”

- B. Before we go forward in these verses, let’s back up quickly and look at vv.1-10. Paul tells Titus in v.1, “*You must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.*” In other words, part of learning sound doctrine is changing our behavior. Then he tells Titus several different groups he is to address. Notice, first, how similar the lessons are and, secondly, the repeated reason... [vv.2-10]
- C. So those verses lead to the teaching work of grace in v.12, “*It [grace] teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...*” Here’s the same idea in other words, from *The Message*, “*We’re being shown how to turn our backs on a godless, indulgent life, and how to take on a God-filled, God-honoring life.*”

D. The Lord Jesus is doing that for us now and it is a **gift**.

Anyone who has been born again *wants* to turn away from our old patterns and live a “*God-filled, God-honoring life.*” So here’s the point: **Don’t go it alone!** Don’t try godliness on your own!

Let me give you an example. Choose a common sin for you—losing your temper, cynicism, unkindness, lust, dishonesty. I’m guessing you don’t know how to stop it or it wouldn’t come to mind. So you pray, not just that the Lord would take it away—because he may not do that. **You pray that he would school you in saying ‘No’ to it.** “*Lord Jesus, would you help me understand this? I want to refuse this stuff. I want to live a self-controlled, loving and godly life. I see from Scripture that you will school me in this because of the same grace that saved me. Now where do we start?*”

- E. One more thing: You noticed the **reason** Paul emphasizes this change of behavior. “*So that no one will malign the word of God*” (v.5), by which he means the gospel. It’s difficult to malign the gospel when people see the change in the lives of older men and women. After all, it’s tough to teach old dogs new tricks! But that’s what happens with the gospel word. Again, in v.8, “*so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.*” And v.10, “*so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.*” God uses our Christlike behavior, so different from other people, as salt to give them a taste for Jesus.

So... are you actually waiting expectantly for Christ’s return? Waiting for us is not passive, it is active. We’re like students who see the end of the semester coming and we have a lot to accomplish—in becoming Christlike!

Illus.: Leif Enger is a favorite writer of mine. In his new novel, *Virgil Wander*, Virgil is trying to figure out his life after a near death experience. He owns a dying movie theater in a dying little town on Lake Superior in Minnesota. At one point he tells his girlfriend that his theater, the Empress, was for sale.

“You’re getting ready,” she said brightly. I hadn’t considered it in those words—getting ready. I’d been thinking in terms of getting out, which cast me inevitably as a refugee. Getting ready was better.

That fits us as believers. We’re not waiting to get out. We’re getting ready. So we must be teachable in the schooling for sainthood that Christ’s grace is giving us.

So what are we waiting for? **V.13**, “*While we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...*”

II. THE APPEARING OF CHRIST’S GLORY WILL BE WORTH THE WAIT!

- A. That phrase, our “blessed hope,” has become dear to Christians. Hope comes in two versions. One is a wish. “I hope I get to see my mom this summer.” The other is a certainty that hasn’t happened yet. Here are two women who earnestly hope to have a child. One woman is pregnant, the other isn’t. Two kinds of hope. Our hope is pregnant! The word *blessed* tells us that our hope is God-kissed, it imparts happiness and delight.
- B. Our blessed hope is “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” The appearing of the glory. I was wondering what that *glory* will be like. I’ve been looking for pictures to project of Christ’s Second Coming and they all do their best, but about all they have to work with, it seems, is clouds and a picture of Jesus. My favorite has been the picture by Ron DiCianni because I

love the joy and the energy and scope of it. But it, too, is very limited. The epiphany of Christ's glory will, first of all, be visual. We're expected to use our imaginations. It will be a stunning sight. Jude says, "*the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones.*" "*The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*" Try to imagine that!

That phrase, "*our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*" We will see the glory of Jesus as God. We have almost no frame of reference for that. Jesus' transfiguration displayed his glory. "*His face shown like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.*" But the surroundings were subdued. No clouds, no angels, no shout or trumpet. Only three disciples and two heavenly saints witnessing it, and the disciples were not overjoyed. They were terrified!

When John saw the glorified Christ in his vision he was "*like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.*" I have the feeling after John wrote those words he must've thought, "*Is that the best I can do?! Jesus was so much more glorious than that!*"

Another aspect of the glory of his appearing will be the uniting of his church, rising from graves and from earth-bound lives to meet him in the air. All the believers, and all changed in the twinkling of an eye to be like Christ. Our bodies will be like Jesus' resurrection body. We've never all been together. Never seen each other. And suddenly, there we will all be, dressed in white to meet Jesus!

C. *“The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”* Which led Paul to this in **v.14**: *“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.”* The glory of Jesus Christ as Savior is captured in those words. In the moment we see Jesus I think we will be stunned by these gospel truths which we have long believed. But there he will be, in an epiphany of glory, the One “who gave himself for us!” That glorious God gave himself *for us!* And his self-giving was humbling and brutal and solitary, cloaked not in light but in deep darkness, not with the triumphant shouts of angels but of demons. *“Who gave himself for us!”* And look at the twin glories of what he accomplished:

“To redeem us from all wickedness.” He bought us out of our bondage to wickedness, not to even mention death and hell. We could not escape from wickedness. We were infected with it, imprisoned by it, condemned by it. And Jesus—this glorious God and Savior—redeemed us out of it, erasing our debt and our sentence of everlasting death. In that moment, freed from earth and mortality, face to face with Jesus, our redemption will as bright as the face of Christ!

“To purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” Look at him in his glory again. How could *he* want *us!*? Yet he has made us, not only his servants, or his worshippers, but his *beloved bride*, *“a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”* After all, look at *us!* *“The bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.”* Rev. 19:8 We are *his*

people in the same way a groom speaks of *his wife*. We are his exclusively—*his very own*. And because of his expansive saving, we are now “*eager to do good*,” enthusiastic to be like Christ. That, too, is part of the glory on that bright morning. And that’s why we must be eager to do good now because it is our identity and our destiny.

Conclusion

What are the takeaways from this passage? First, **wait for Christ’s return by being schooled in godliness**. Leave fingerprints on your windows from checking the sky! Wait by amping up your eagerness to do good, *to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age*.

Cultivate a yearning to be with Jesus. Not just to leave this troubled world—although that is a precious thought indeed—but to see that epiphany of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Illus.: On the last Sunday of May in 1986 my dad, Lyle, was asked to sing in church. He agreed to fill in for someone else whose turn it was. (Most families took a turn with the special music.) He chose one of his favorites.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Life’s trials will seem so small when we see Christ.

One glimpse of his dear face

All sorrow will erase

So bravely run the race

Till we see Christ.

Somewhere in the middle of the song he very uncharacteristically choked up and began to weep. Marge at the piano finished singing it for him. It was the last time he was ever in church. The next Sunday, while shaving for church, he collapsed at age 63, and just like that, he was with Jesus. *Even so, come Lord Jesus.*