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A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

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"INTOLERANT" GRACE : TITUS 2:11–15

Bryan Chapell

Whatever happened to revival? A few years ago, there was a spate of books on the coming revival. Christian radio and television were dominated by talk of when and how revival would come. Articles and authors explored revivals of the past and plotted parallel paths necessary for a revival to come today. And now—virtual silence. Except for a few preachers still trying to whip up enthusiasm in congregations tired of praying for what has not come, the battle drum beats ever more softly and distantly. Why? Perhaps because in all the talk about revival, we got a glimpse of what it would actually require—not of all those reprobate folk out there in a sinful society, but of us, the called people of God in the church.

My intention is to beat the revival drum again, but not without counting the costs lest renewed enthusiasm only lead to repeated discouragement. Living for others and denying the idols of sensuality are, at least, some of the means and evidences of revival among God's people. They are also the challenges Paul urges Titus to impress upon the church at Crete in order for that society to change. They remain the radical challenges facing us if our culture is to experience true revival through us. In the early verses of Titus 2, the apostle lists specific imperatives for God's people, and then—in words upon which I will focus—he explains why these mandates are neces-

sary for us to experience a deluge of grace (vv. 11-15). When El Niño's rain deluged Southern California this past winter, the potential dangers of mudslides became a real nightmare for one family. While the family was still in their home a wave of mud tore through the house, severing it and sweeping a sleeping baby out into the night. The parents began to search through the darkness for the child. Tromping through the filth that had descended upon their neighborhood, they searched, dug, and called for their child throughout the long night—without results. Then when the morning dawned a rescuer, himself covered in mud, came to the parents with a mud-caked bundle in his arms: the baby, filthy but alive. You know what the mother then did? She clung to her child despite its filth, washed the mud away, and determined to keep the child out of the mud in the future.

The account helps me with concepts in Titus 2 that are so opposed to our common thought about the nature of God's grace. Grace, we know, annuls our works as the means of securing or maintaining God's affection. The natural human inclination, as a result, is to suppose that if our good works do not determine God's affection, then there is no reason to do them. Why be concerned about godliness since we are saved by grace? Because, say the Scriptures, when the filth of my sin was sweeping me in my helplessness to eternal death, God came calling, covered Himself in the muck of this world to rescue me, embraced me despite my filth, and now He wants me out of the mud. Such grace should make us so in love with God that we cannot stand in our lives what resoils us and offends Him. Ours is an intolerant grace. The apostle here underscores this truth saying that it is the grace of God that teaches us to say "No" to "ungodliness and worldly desires" (vv. 11-12).

Grace—rightly perceived—compels holiness. This is

not a natural logic, we must confess. After all, if someone is full of grace he is supposed to say, "Okay, that's all right, fine, never mind, go ahead." But for this apostle, grace means we say "No." What kind of grace is this? The apostle answers by disclosing the character of Christ's rescue, His requirements, and His redeemed.

The unmerited favor of God is what Jesus is about, but it is also who He is. We should, thus, see grace as a personal action by a personal God who saved us from our helpless condition out of pure love.



THE RESCUE OF GRACE

The apostle begins to tell us the nature of transforming grace by telling us what God's saving grace has already accomplished. When Paul says that grace has "appeared," he uses a word that sometimes functioned as a technical term to describe a hero (or god) breaking into a helpless situation to rescue from danger (v. 11). Paul typically uses this term to refer to the past or future coming of Christ to rescue His people (cf. v. 13). When Paul uses the same term to describe grace he so intertwines who Christ is with what Christ provides that the two become inseparable in our consideration. Grace is not some abstract doctrine or theological construct. Christ is grace. Grace is as personal as He. The unmerit-

ed favor of God is what Jesus is about, but it is also who He is. We should, thus, see grace as a personal action by a personal God who saved us from our helpless condition out of pure love.

Intimate affection by a majestic God is Paul's message, but intimacy is not all the message. We are told additionally that "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." The ancients would have understood a god who came to rescue a person, a group, a city, or even a nation from a personal crisis. The ancient Greek and Roman plays included the *Deus ex Machina* where a god intervened to rescue from a specific crisis. But the apostle speaks of a different kind of appearing. This appearance is not limited in scope to a man or clan. This rescue is held up as though it is to be offered and sufficient for all. This does not mean that all will receive it, but that what brings salvation to all who will receive it has appeared.

The combination of such an intimate and immense rescue must have an effect upon us. Our hearts should flood with thanksgiving and gratitude, and one more thing—determination. When we realize that we have been rescued from the clutches of evil against which we were helpless in our own strength, then our natural resolution is never to go back there. We never want to allow the evil to take hold again. That is why the rescue of grace results in requirements. Not because the requirements rescue, but because the rescued who truly recognize the danger they were in desire and strive to be forever free of its clutches.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF GRACE

What the grace that has appeared requires is phrased in both negative and positive commands (v. 12).

1) To say "No." First, Paul says that that grace is

"instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires." "Ungodliness" is a reference to the Christian's conduct—or misconduct. One commentator refers to Paul's use of "godliness" as "reverence manifested in actions"—our external behaviors. But the ungodly externals are not all what Paul has in view as deserving our "No." We are also to say "No" to "worldly desires." This means that we are to deny ourselves not only external conduct that betrays God but also similar internal impulses, what the KJV simply describes as "lusts," and other versions variously translate as worldly "appetites," "desires," or "cravings." There is no question that sexual compulsions are included in the term, but there is also the concern for anger, hatred, ambition, and other urges that result in uncontrolled speech or behavior.

Now consider precisely from where these prohibitions come: They are not the means to get to God; rather they are a consequence of seeing the appearing of the grace that is God in Christ. When the prophet Isaiah saw the majesty and holiness of God, he fell down and cried out, "Woe is me, for I am ruined." When God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, the deliverer of God's people hid his face. Paul expects the effect of seeing God so clearly in the grace that is in Christ Jesus to affect us no differently. When we have seen God so clearly we must have an intense awareness of our shame. That is why Paul says that the grace of God that has appeared teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness (v. 12). We want to be rid of what stains us before the radiance of His glorious grace. But saying "No" is not our only obligation. Isaiah rose, asking God to use him, and Moses walked from the burning bush to do as God required. There are positive compulsions that also arise from grace.

2) To say "Yes." Grace teaches us to say "No" to

ungodliness and worldly desires, but it also teaches us "to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (v.12). The first two terms could fairly be called the antithesis of ungodliness and worldly passions (the earlier terms were about unrighteousness and lack of restraint; these are about control of passions and uprightness), which is why the third term is so important. If being a Christian involved only self-control over our passions and upright behavior then we might get the idea that the Christian life was only a matter of living according to certain rules or performing in an acceptable way. By adding the word "godly" to the ways that grace teaches us to live, the apostle reminds us that the Christian life is one of dependence on God. Godliness is not a consequence of human resolution or willpower, it is a relationship with God that results in a life honoring to God. Our lives should affirm the grace that is in us by the way we live.

3) To act now. How long are we expected to live according to these standards? Is holy living a matter only of the past when people were under the law? No. Grace teaches us to live in a way honoring to God "in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (vv. 12-13). We are not allowed to say that in this age of grace there are no standards for us to follow. Godliness remains our obligation until Jesus returns.

In summary, grace requires that we say "No" to the world and "Yes" to God—now. These standards have not changed. Have they for you? So many and full are the categories of conduct that Paul addresses that we may be tempted to affirm our general obedience without really having examined the particulars of our lives. To force us to answer whether we are, in fact, willing to say "No" to the world and "Yes" to God now, I am going to focus on

one area in this article, not because it is the only area on which we could focus, but because it is an area affecting my family rather acutely at this time. Further, it is my guess that this is an area of discussion that will challenge you and will force some rather pointed reflection on whether you really want revival. I want to address the entertainments many of us Christians currently include in our lives.

A few weeks ago my son went to see a popular movie. Unbeknownst to him and to us, due to the posted rating, the movie included a scene with nudity and a following sexual encounter. My son walked out and took his friends with him. I was, and am, so proud of him. But, what happened to my son afterward has left me flabbergasted, discouraged and, yes, to some degree, angry. Over the next several weeks his Christian friends, others he looks up to, and even relatives, almost without exception, told him in various ways that he had misjudged the situation. They said, or implied, that if he had just stayed longer, he would have seen that the content got better, was exciting, and that the sexual material was not bad enough to keep any really mature Christian with a well-developed world and life view from seeing the rest of the movie. The result, of course, is that my son felt silly, confused, and alone in his commitment.

Now if I can read your minds, I can imagine that most of you are taking in a nervous mental breath wondering, "Is he really going to say that we shouldn't see any movie that has an objectionable scene or non-Christian values?" Let me first assure you that I recognize the folly of trying to establish a yardstick for flesh exposed, or lists of words used and themes addressed, in order to determine the appropriateness of works of literature and art for Christian consumption. At the same time I will demand that Christians "now"—of this place,

culture and time—answer God regarding whether their entertainments, habits and appetites exhibit a true commitment to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly desires, and "Yes" to sensible, righteous, and godly living. Our inability to draw hard and fast lines regarding artistic expression for all historical and cultural conditions does not remove our responsibility to determine if what we are consuming, and encouraging others to consume by our example, is damaging the cause of Christ.

I write with great frankness about these issues because I am increasingly disturbed at what Christians in this culture will do, see and enjoy under the rationale that grace allows it. I am shocked at the movies we see, flabbergasted by the magazines we read, embarrassed by the music in which we immerse ourselves, stunned by the language we use, angered by the television shows and movies we unreflectively discuss before young people, and bewildered that anyone would think that this is what is needed for us to walk with God and lead this culture to Him. Of course, my opinions of these matters count for absolutely nothing. It is God's assessment alone of such habits that counts, and my concern is to ask whether you are willing to consider this judgment.

My guess is that there are many who will respond to my questioning of whether our entertainments honor God with three words: "But Francis Schaeffer . . ." These words are, of course, only prelude to considerations we all recognize and honor: "But Francis Schaeffer said that we should not live in a corner culture, that we should grow in our awareness of the values of our culture so that we would be able to dialogue with it and ultimately penetrate it with the message of the gospel." Yes, that is what Schaeffer said. And I agree with him—profoundly and deeply. But I must ask whether you do?

What specifically did Schaeffer say? This:

Often, after a person is born again and asks, "What shall I do next?" he is given a list of things, usually of a limited nature and primarily negative. . . . The true Christian life is not merely a negative not-doing of any small list of things. Even if the list began as an excellent list of things to beware of in that particular historical setting, we still must emphasize that the Christian life, or true spirituality, is more than a refraining from a certain external list of taboos in a mechanical way.

Because this is true almost always there is a reaction: another group of Christians begins to work against such a list of taboos; thus, there is a tendency toward a struggle in Christian circles between those who set up a certain list of taboos and those who, feeling there is something wrong with this, say, "Away with all taboos, away with all lists." Both of these groups can be right and both can be wrong, depending on how they approach the matter.

I was impressed by this one Saturday night at L'Abri, when we were having one of our discussion times. On that particular night everybody present was a Christian, many of them from groups in countries where "lists" had been very much accentuated; they began to talk against the use of taboos, and at first, as I listened to them, I rather agreed with the direction they were going. But as I listened further to this conversation, and as they spoke against the taboos in their own countries, it became quite clear to me that what they really wanted was merely to be able to do the things which the taboos were against. What they really wanted was a more lax Christian life. But we must see that in giving up such lists, in feeling the limitation of the "list" mentality, we must not do this merely in order to be able to live a looser life: it must be for something deeper.¹

With Schaeffer there was a certainly a push to make Christians aware of the values, concerns and trends of

our culture, but you must not forget why. Beneath the evaluation was outrage and grief. Outrage that the sophisticates of culture could take the noble things of creation and use them in rebellion against the Creator. Grief—intense and compelling—that young people were being led astray. A life committed to their redemption (on their terms, if necessary) was the zeal of Schaeffer. Is it yours? There are those in our circles who say they liked the early Schaeffer who battled legalism and affirmed the arts, but who did not like the later Schaeffer whose voice changed into one that battled cultural accommodation and Western decadence. My suspicion is that Schaeffer's values did not change at all, his outrage simply grew as his cultural awareness and assessment became more refined.

To those who will say, "Don't you know about the Reformed world and life view which says we cannot divide the world into sacred and secular realms because all is under the lordship of Christ, and that we must understand our culture in order to minister effectively in it and redeem it?" I will say, "Yes, you are right. This is what I believe and have committed my life to teaching." Now I must ask you, "Is the reason that you are partaking of the entertainments that are poisoning the minds and morals of many in our society truly so that you can redeem them?" I cannot answer this question for you, but when you see what is illicit, immoral, or indecent on the screen, do you hate it? Are you outraged, out for redemption or just out with the rest of culture for a Saturday movie?

Are you redeeming or simply imbibing? Are you being informed or simply being entertained? Are you evaluating or simply enjoying? Are *you* living as though there is no division of the sacred and the secular? Specifically, are you watching, reading, and listening to your

entertainments conscious that whether you are in a bright church, darkened theater or secluded room, that you are before the face of God? Do you believe that wherever you are, you are on holy ground? Does what you are doing really reflect the conviction that a holy God who saved you from the death grasp of sin is with you in every place, and that you must now live in gratitude to Him with every thought, motive and action? Are you doing everything in word and deed to the glory of God (Col. 3:17), or does your God go away when the lights go out?

Do you believe that wherever you are, you are on holy ground? Does what you are doing really reflect the conviction that a holy God who saved you from the death grasp of sin is with you in every place, and that you must now live in gratitude to Him with every thought, motive and action?



These are hard questions even for the one who asks them of you. I struggle to know all the answers in my own life, and look for the means to evaluate my habits in these words. How do we examine and, if necessary, resensitize our consciences? How do you and I know if we have moved beyond the boundaries of God's require-

ments in our own lives, and are again in danger of being swept away by the mud—the filth of this world? Honest questions based on the apostle's instructions will help you with the answer, if you will dare to ask them:

1) Have you lost the ability to say "No"? To answer this question will require you to consider—in what may be painful reflection—your own degree of power and perception. In terms of power, you must honestly assess your internal compulsions—worldly passions. Do they control you? Do you see certain movies, not because of their literary content, but because you need a sexual fix? I cannot answer for you, but you must answer if you are to honor your Lord. Christ takes every idol of culture (sex, power, money) and requires it to bow before Him. If those idols are beginning to control your thoughts, actions and anticipations, then you are bowing before them. What can you not wait to see or do or enjoy? For what are you actually eager?

We may have difficulty answering these questions because our thoughts may already be so controlled by what culture approves that we have lost the ability to say "No," simply because we can no longer discern what God wants. My colleague, Dr. Dan Doriani, reported recently that he had to turn off a rented video in his home because of its content. When he spoke to an adult Sunday school class about the decision, however, about half of the people just looked puzzled. They could not even see what was the problem.

Sin has the ability to callous, to make us insensitive to its evil, and part of the evidence of its affecting us is that we lose a sense of distinction between godliness and ungodliness. There is a difference between what the world approves and what God approves, and if we are in large measure simply accepting what the world accepts, something is amiss. Are there any borders that distin-

guish you from the culture around you? Oh, I know that we will all say that pornography is a problem, but apart from what even popular culture says is immoral and wrong is there any movie you will not see, any book you will not read? *Seinfeld*, *Saturday Night Live*, *NYPD Blue*, and the *Simpsons*—is everything acceptable in your home . . . in your heart? Are you really any different from the general culture? The questions must be answered because when Christian borders disappear (or the world defines them), then our ability to say "No" in God's terms also disappears. We become like those, described by the apostle Paul, who have "given themselves over to sensuality" (Eph. 4:19), or like those of whom Jeremiah said, "They did not know how to blush" (Jer. 8:12).

Sadly we often do not regain the sensitivity to sin that the Bible requires until we have experienced a moral failure that tears calloused sensibilities from our hearts and makes us tender again to God, and newly sensitive to sin. Over and over again I hear of church leaders who realize only after a fall how subtle were the influences of culture that seduced them, or their loved ones, through years of desensitizing entertainments. Only after the fall (or after God has renewed in them a concern for the lost that makes the evidence of sin so much more real) do they have blinders removed to see the sin again. God does not want you or me to be blind to what is erasing our own awareness of sin.

A generation ago the spiritual forefathers of the evangelical movement fought for the authority of God's Word *and* against the church's accommodation to culture. I dare to say that in our churches, despite some intramural debates, the truth of the Bible is well affirmed. But I cannot see the same success regarding cultural commitments. We seem increasingly indistin-

guishable from a culture that denies itself nothing. Our lifestyles seem more and more to reflect the accuracy of Francis Schaeffer's assessments made three decades ago:

We are surrounded by a world that says "no" to nothing. When we are surrounded by this sort of mentality . . . , then suddenly to be told that in the Christian life there is to be this strong negative aspect of saying "no" to things and "no" to self, it must seem hard. And if it does not feel hard to us, we are not really letting it speak to us.

. . . We have a society that holds itself back from nothing. . . . Any concept of a real "no" is avoided as much as possible. . . . Absolutes of any kind, ethical principles, everything must give in to affluence and selfish personal peace. . . .

Of course, this environment of—of not saying "no"—fits exactly into our natural disposition, because, since the fall of man, we do not want to deny ourselves. . . . And this natural disposition fits in exactly with the environment which surrounds us in the twentieth century.²

Francis Schaeffer stood for the truth of Scripture and against cultural accommodation. My sense is that he would be pleased at our stance regarding Scripture—almost all evangelicals will say that the Bible is true—but as to whether we have won the war against cultural accommodation, the statistics I see say that we evangelicals are every day more like our culture.

2) Have you lost the concern to say "No"? I well expect that the cry of many Christians to a renewed plea for purity in our entertainments will be, "You cannot take my liberty away. I am under grace. I am not under the law." I agree that I cannot judge the thoughts and motives of others, and that this limits my ability and right to draw hard lines for others where matters are questionable, but this does not allow me or you to stop being concerned for others. The Christian life cannot be lived autonomously.

When Paul outlines the behavior God expects of those in the household of faith, he reminds each member that they are not alone—the actions of each touch others. Older men are to set an example for others. The older women are to be reverent so that they can teach younger women (Titus 2:3-4). Titus himself is to be an example to others (2:7). The Christian life does not function independently; we are part of a community, and our actions must be considered in light of their effects upon others. Said Schaeffer,

We are to be willing to say "no" to ourselves, we are to be willing to say "no" to things in order that the command to love God and men may have real meaning. Even in things which are lawful to me, things which do not break the Ten Commandments, I am not to seek my own, but I am to seek another man's good. . . .³

It is not enough to argue in the face of immoral entertainments, "It doesn't bother me." Maybe you are untouched by the intended stimulation of worldly passions and addictive appetites, but the church is not untouched. While I was in the pastorate, about half of the young people I married were sexually active prior to marriage. I am told by my pastoral friends, and the statistics in ministry journals, that the percentages are higher today, both because cultural standards continue to fall and because people are getting married at older ages and are therefore even more likely to have been sexually active prior to marriage. The abortion rate is not significantly different among those in evangelical churches than those similar socio-economic categories in the general culture. The frequency of unfaithfulness among pastors is epidemic. Sexual disease, dysfunction, addiction and abuse are "the common colds" of the

church. Something is terribly wrong among us, and do any of us really doubt that at least part of the problem that has stripped away moral reservation, inhibition and respect is our society's entertainment norms?

Will history judge desensitized, contemporary Christians any less harshly for paying to see sexual acts on movie screens, than we judge ancient Christians who participated in pagan rituals? Will Jesus judge us less because our culture approves?



Do these matters concern you? Do you see the evil of explicit sexual expression in the entertainment medium as the lure of Satan that it is? Will you acknowledge that sexual expression on the screen is evil for those participating? Will you consider what your dollars support and what your example endorses in the light of Scripture (cf. Titus 2:7)? Will history judge desensitized, contemporary Christians any less harshly for paying to see sexual acts on movie screens, than we judge ancient Christians who participated in pagan rituals? Will Jesus judge us less because our culture approves? Can you as a committed Christian really not be concerned about the effects on young people across our country—longing, lusting,

and learning in the darkened-theater-classrooms of Hollywood what marriage, sexual intimacy and regard for another human being should be? As our entertainments increasingly focus on peeling away inhibition or restraint, and feeding aberrant curiosity, do you care?

Perhaps you personally are untouched by the values of the culture evident in the violence of movies, television and video games. But Jonesboro has been touched, and West Paducah, and East St. Louis, and countless homes—Christian and otherwise—where abuse and the dehumanizing of people into objects of rage for personal pleasure is staggering. Awareness of what the morals and mores of our culture produce, forces us to ask the hardest question of all: not only are we concerned about our community but, as we see its devastation, are we concerned about our complicity?

Do you doubt really that the entertainments of this culture have had a significant role in the objectifying of individuals, the cheapening of human life, and the ill-restraint of sexual expression outside of marriage? If it is true that entertainments influence our culture (and deep down we all believe that they do), then the promiscuity of the young, the consequent abortions, the tainted marriages that follow, the sexually transmitted diseases that kill and maim, the adulteries and divorces that ensue, the cases of abuse that inevitably arise from minds twisted and stimulated—all are in some measure the responsibility of those who support the entertainments. We must be concerned about our complicity as well as our community if we are to abhor the evil of our culture as rigorously as the Bible requires.

The problems of sensualism are not just in the secular culture, but rather the erosion of morality is devastating the families and futures of those in the church, and we seem oblivious to how our habits make us part of the

problem. If you truly care—if you are truly concerned for the good of others—then you must not fail to address as hard a question as this: Do you really think that our children will be sexually pure when Christian adults, teachers, and youth leaders freely discuss sexually explicit and profane entertainments that they have enjoyed simply because they are older? I do not take pleasure in mentioning these matters, but I write knowing that some will not even attempt to wean themselves of ungodliness and worldly passions until they are sickened by the evidence of their effects on those most precious to them. Our practices and pleasures are examples to others of our values and God's expectations. Are you concerned enough for others to say "No" knowing that your actions affect others?

3) Have you lost the zeal to say "No"? The reason that Paul tells us to live conscious of the effects of our actions on others is not merely for the sake of those in the Christian community, but for those outside as well. Paul says that the reason that those in the church should guard their behaviors is so "that the word of God may not be dishonored" (2:5).

The Bible says a man who looks on a woman with lust commits adultery, that we should shun vain and profane language, that our thoughts should be pure, that we should be sexually satisfied with our spouses, that we are to be sophisticated about what is good but innocent (naïve and simple, not well-schooled) about what is evil. If we in the church ignore the specific statements and implications of these verses, then we are saying that the Bible does not really say what it means, and we malign its truths. These are the truths of Scripture:

But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there

must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. . . . And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret (Eph. 5:3-4; 11-12).

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth (Col. 3: 5-8).

Did someone erase these words of Scripture for this present age? Did God say, "Never mind"? If we act as though these and other such verses went away in some past age, then we undermine the authority of God's Word, and this cannot but affect the way that others will receive it when we speak of its redemptive truths. Yet, I hear many Christians speaking as though the fact they are mature, well-schooled, and well-informed is the very thing that allows them permission to ignore such Scripture. Such persons say: "I am mature, so I can see what is immoral and indecent." "I am mature, so I can speak in profane and crude terms." "I am mature, so I can frequent the nightspots of the ungodly, and cultivate spiritually dangerous habits. I have risen above the fundamentalistic moralisms of the legalists in my church, so I can do as I want."

Such a "sophisticated" and "mature" Christianity certainly grants us allowance to do many things that other Christians may disapprove, but is it the type of maturity that Christ advocates for the fulfillment of His purposes? Is it the life of sacrifice to which Christ calls His disciples? Schaeffer said,

Let us not be confused here. The moment we accepted Jesus Christ as our savior, we were justified and our guilt was gone once for all. That is absolute. But if we want to know anything of the reality in the Christian life, anything of true spirituality, we must "take up our cross daily." The principle of saying "no" to self lies at the heart of my attitude toward the world as it maintains its alien stand in rebellion against the Creator. . . .

If I use my intellectual capacities to make myself respectable to the world, as it is in revolution against the One who created it, then I have failed. . . . True spirituality does not stop at the negative, but without the negative—in comprehension and practice—we are not ready to go on.⁴

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Let me be very clear: if anyone says that what we do merits us God's love, then that is legalistic trash. If anyone says that we must do other than what the Bible requires, then that is the rubbish of Pharisaism. But if anyone says that it does not matter to God what we do, then that is selfish, unbiblical, and damaging to the Gospel of our Lord. No revival has come without the proclaimers of grace reviling and rebuking the common, worldly entertainments of the day.

Others are enslaved to the evil of this world, and if we pursue our liberties primarily for our sakes, then we may profess a maturity that gives us rights, but it will not support a proclamation that brings revival. The necessity of rigorous godliness for gospel witness is evident in the behaviors the apostle demands. Younger men are to set an example "in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us" (v. 8). Further, the most obvious instruction to live for others rather than for self comes when Paul says that slaves should be subject to their masters "that they [the slaves] may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect" (v. 10). Paul is not here advocating slavery—the apostles never tell anyone to enslave another, but they do make it clear that we are to enslave ourselves for the sake of the gospel.

The goal of the godly is to adorn the gospel with credibility and evidence of its power in their lives. The Bible calls us to even enslave ourselves to what is disadvantageous to us so that others will be freed from the slavery of sin. If our lives exhibit no freedom from the passions of this world, then our lives implicitly say the gospel makes no difference.

The indulgence of ungodliness and worldly passions ultimately is a denial of the Word of God and message of the Savior. In contrast, our zeal is a consequence of wanting our Savior to be known as the One who has rescued us from evil, from compulsion, from infectious sin, from the evaluation of a person's worth by the degree of pleasure that he or she can bring me. We should be living so that people will know their worth in Christ as the gospel proclaims—this must change us because the gospel changes everything!

If you are uncomfortable with what I have said about our entertainments, your most likely responses

will be: "You can't take away my liberty, and even if I changed it would make no difference—the culture will not change. I'll only take abuse for my stand. My church will only run headlong back into legalism if I get concerned about these matters. You cannot quote a specific Bible verse to deny me what I want, and besides, I like these things." Please recognize that these are the same things that will be said about every category of instruction that the apostle has covered: employment, speech, church leadership, homemaking. This is why revival is so costly. The deep transformations of culture that true revival requires will bring these same concerns into every dimension of the life of each person in the church: (1) The businessman whose industry is characterized by compromises that are contrary to the gospel. Such a man knows that his challenge of "the system" will likely make no difference, will only cause him to suffer, and will deny him the success to which his life is dedicated. (2) The young mother who is wrestling with what Scripture says about her commitments to her family and what her culture says about her career will ask the same questions. (3) A young person considering promiscuity and/or drugs will also reason: "Any stand I make against these things will make no difference to the vast majority of my friends, will only cause me pain, and will deny me what others enjoy." (4) A family caught in the subtle cords of materialism and social acceptance may not even be able to see the societal sin that is making every day more desperate in the home financially, relationally, and spiritually. Restoring such lost perception will require a spiritual battling that many of us dread even considering.

Revival in all the areas the apostle identifies as requiring Christian transformation will be terribly costly. Who has any zeal for this and what will ignite it? The

answer must be love for Him who gave Himself for us. Such love the apostle sparks by reminding us of our Savior's actions and attitudes in our behalf.

THE REDEEMED OF GRACE

Having been explicit about the requirements of God, the apostle makes it just as clear that these are not the reasons God loves us. We are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (2:13-14). The work of salvation is His, and we are His. These statements are our great protection against legalism and our great propulsion toward godliness. Because Christ's work alone purchases our salvation through the redeeming price of His blood, and Christ's work alone purifies us through the cleansing that blood supplies, we do not look to our works as the basis of acceptance. Doing what God requires does not make us His own, but having been made His own by no work of ours, we now love to love Him who first loved us (cf. 1 John 4:19).

My daughter sometimes says to her mother, "Mommy, I love you with all *your* heart." I realize why a three-year-old says such things. She tries to show her love by mistakenly echoing her mother's frequent endearment, "Katie, I love you with all my heart." But it is no mistake that here in Titus, God teaches us to love Him with all His heart. He pours before us the signs of the love, so that we will love and respond to Him at as high and close a level of affection as the human heart can sustain.

What does being a loved people do to us? It makes us more sensitive to sin. I want you to note clearly the apostle's order. God's people are first ransomed by His

work, then purified to be His own, then they are "eager" (zealous) to do good (Titus: 2:14). In some ways this message turns upside down our more common approach to how the Christian life operates. We tend to think that we cannot see the love of God until we see our sin, but Paul here makes it clear that it is seeing the love of God that enables us to see our sin.

Apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ makes us so long to love Him and reject what hurts Him that we become intolerant of the sin in our lives. I understand this as I look at my own marriage. The longer I am married, the more I marvel at my wife's love for me despite my early coldness and continuing selfishness. But the more I see how much she loves me the more conscious I become of my insensitivities and the more eager I am to please her. The more I perceive her love, the more I cannot stand my sin against her. In the same way, when we see how wondrous is the love of Christ, then we become more and more sensitive to the sin in our lives and we long more and more to do what pleases Him.

This dynamic of having the love of God create an intolerance for sin is what the Puritans called the power of new affections. What will ultimately make us holy is not willpower, not guilt, not an inspiring message, but apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ that actually causes love for God to drive out and replace love for sin. The Puritans taught this truth with the image of the live oak, a variety of tree whose leaves—though dead—stuck to its branches through the winter. What eventually forced the leaves from the tree was not the abuse of the cold or the beating of the wind, but the new life springing up within the tree and replacing that which was dead. So when we are God's people, there yet cling to us affections for evil that we must confess, but these are truly shed only as the love of Christ builds within us

and ultimately drives out the old affections with the new life that is love for Him.

So wondrous are these truths that Paul insists God's people must be led in them—these are not matters we are just to tell people to go figure out for themselves. Paul tells Titus, "These things speak and exhort . . ." (2:15a). What are "these things?" The message of grace that enables Titus to "encourage," and the message of intolerance to sin that requires Titus also to "reprove" where it is appropriate (2:15b). Grace is not grace that saves from nothing, nor does grace teach that a past way of life is inconsequential.

If you teach "these things" (i.e., grace despite sin and obedience through grace) there are those who will accuse you of promoting license on one hand, and there will be those who accuse you of being a legalist on the other hand.



If you teach "these things" (i.e., grace despite sin and obedience through grace) there are those who will accuse you of promoting license on one hand, and there will be those who accuse you of being a legalist on the other hand. But whether they want to call you a prude or a profligate, Paul says the leader of God's people should "let no one" (not those in the world who want to call him a prude nor those in the church who want to

call him a "fundy") "disregard" him, either by failing to speak with authority, or by failing to live in accord with what the Bible says (2:15b).

If you proclaim this message of grace that seeks to break people from their love of sin, I cannot promise your life will be blessed in human terms. In fact, I can virtually guarantee that you will be attacked from all sides—from those saying that you are a legalistic prude who does not understand grace, and from those saying that you are a grace fanatic who has no standards. Still, I say to you, "Let no one disregard you." Make grace clear and tolerate no evil for your sake, for the sake of the people of God, and for the sake of the gospel of Christ. Revival will not come without the price of our discomfort and the cost of personal attack. No revivals of the past have come without dramatic change in the lifestyles of those in the church, as well as the reformation of society.

Extricating ourselves and our people from the mire of those cultural sins that have entered into our habits, appetites, and homes will not come without struggle within and without the church. Still, I urge you to proclaim the unconditional grace of God as the motive and power for standing with an unconditional commitment to godliness. I implore you to take this stand because as the darkness of our culture grows more intense, I and others will need the encouragement of being able to look toward a misty dawn of revival with the assurance that you, too, are willing to carry more of God's children from the muck that threatens their eternal lives. Do not tolerate a gospel not founded on grace, nor a grace that does not inspire holiness. May you so powerfully believe and proclaim the love of Christ that affection for Him drives out the affections of this world.

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Notes

1. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview, Volume Three, A Christian View of Spirituality* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1982), 201-202.
2. *Ibid.*, 216-17.
3. *Ibid.*, 216.
4. *Ibid.*, 224-26.