

To Be Disciples: Living in the Strength of His Glorious Grace

Titus 2:11-14

By [The Reverend Mr. Nathan D. Shurden](#)

*The Lord's Day Morning
February 24, 2013*

Boy I miss that choir! I want to tell you it gets better with each service. That is beautiful. What a joy it is to come home, to First Presbyterian Church, and to be here with you for this grand occasion, this annual Mission Conference. I want to say thank you to Alan Walters and the missions committee for extending to me an invitation, for the elders giving to me this opportunity to address you at the very outset of this tremendous week of celebration in the Gospel and challenge with regards to the work of discipleship and to be able to address you on these important topics is a privilege that I never would have expected to have. And I'm very thankful to the Lord to be in this place right now and to be with you. There's no place I'd rather be, so I'm very, very thankful for this.

I send you greetings from Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Tennessee, which Ligon alluded to just earlier. They are actually presently in the midst of worship as well with us in their second service and I do hope things are going well. I'd be lying to tell you I'm not a little bit worried! Nevertheless, God is in control and He's overseeing it, so we'll trust Him for it.

I am really privileged to be able to lean into this text of the Word of God with you from Titus chapter 2. Ligon made the note of the fact that today, as we are kicking off the Missions Conference together, that today we're focusing on our hearts, we're focusing on our embrace of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel and our commitment to be His disciples, that we are following Him. Because it's not just vocational missionaries and it's not just pastors and it's not just officers in a local congregation that are charged with the work of sharing the Gospel; it's every single Christian. You are God's answer to a world that needs to hear the Gospel. Right in the cubicle next to you, right in the neighbor's house next to you, in that family member who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ and you have been one in whom He has revealed His grace to and shown forth His glory and now has given you the tongue and the life to be loosened and to display the glories of the Gospel that Jesus might be made winsome in the hearts of those who are closest to you and those who are farthest away. That's our prayer this

morning - that He'd so that work, and as we look at what it means to be a disciple of Christ you'd be spurred in your own heart to make disciples for Christ. That's my prayer this morning as we come into the text.

So before we read it, I'd ask you to pray with me that God would come in a mighty way and speak very personally to every heart in this room. Let's pray to that end right now.

Father in heaven, we entrust this time to You. You have called us into worship, You have promised that every time Your Word is opened You are in the midst of Your people. We are not listening to a man's opinions; we are not listening to the thoughts of a mere mortal. We are hearing from Your very mouth. Planned from before the foundation of the world, this passage for this time for these Your people for a very particular purpose. Do not let us miss it, Father. Give to us Your Spirit in tremendous portion and let us behold the glory and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we would be transfixed and would never once again think to draw our eyes away from the One who has redeemed us and the One by grace who has called us into this work. This we ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Titus chapter 2 verses 11 to 14. This is God's Word:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

A friend of mine, as he was beginning college, lost his way spiritually, otherwise known as swinging from the rafters of his fraternity house most nights of the week. As he was indulging in every kind of vice that you can imagine, he would occasionally slip into one of the ministries on campus because he was a Christian, or at least he's always professed to be. One campus minister who knew his reputation all too well — it went before him after all — decided he would ask him out to lunch, and he did. Over lunch, he worked up the courage to ask him an all-important question. He said, “Are you a disciple of Christ?” My friend set down his grilled cheese that he had been enjoying and haltingly said, “Well, yes, I'm a Christian.” And the campus minister looked him in the eye and said, “Well what about your current life gives evidence to the fact?”

Now even as you feel that response right there in the pew it probably does to you what it does to me even to say it, which is to say, “Hold on just a minute. You seem to be drawing into question my profession in Christ, presumably because of the way in which I am living.” Well this campus minister knew exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ had said in Luke chapter 6 verse 40, that he who is truly a

disciple who is listening to a teacher, he is one who becomes like his teacher. He begins to be conformed into the image of that which he is following. This campus minister knew that you couldn't profess Jesus Christ as Savior and not be committed to following Him as Lord. That you couldn't make disciples and go on mission with Christ if you'd never actually become a disciple in the first place, which means a change of life, a transformation of heart. I'm thankful that my friend took those words to heart, after he was offended for a few days of course. It haunted him. It haunted him to the point that he was actually converted and he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ for the very first time and today is actually a minister of the Gospel who is regularly a challenge to me with regards to his own conformity to the call of Christ. How beautiful is that story? How remarkable is the power of the Gospel?

If someone asked you this morning, "Are you a disciple of Christ?" and then said, "What evidence would you point to that reveals unmistakably that you are?" would you have a hard time answering? In Titus chapter 2, we learn three very important marks of what it means to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. We learn in verses 11 to 12 that we must be trained by grace. We learn in verses 12 and 14 that we are trained for godliness and for good works. And we learn thirdly, in verse 13, that we are trained to wait for the appearing of Christ's glory.

TRAINED BY GRACE

Let's look first at what it means to be a disciple in training by grace. Paul, as he's writing to Titus, says in verse 11, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." Now as Paul writes to Titus as he pastors, he pastors a congregation on the island of Crete, an island that was actually known for infamous sinners. And Paul says so himself in chapter 1 of this small epistle. He actually refers to an author who is a Cretan himself, a prophet who describes the Cretan people, and he uses these words: liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. Not what I would say your mama wants to be able to say about you; it's not that kind of a phrase. These are hard words, difficult things, which made the call to discipleship in Crete very, very challenging. Titus has been called as a pastor to train this congregation and what it means to actually follow Christ, he tells them, listening to the apostle Paul, that their lives are to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior. In other words, who we are and how we live is to put on display the beauty of the Gospel that we have embraced, and in order for that to happen, we must be trained.

Now how does grace train you? We don't often think about grace being a training program to whip us into shape, to make us into disciples of Christ, but that's exactly what Paul is saying in Titus. He says, this grace, if you get it, it transforms you from the inside out; it conforms you to the pattern of life that is consistent with Christ. And I think to be able to see how this grace trains you, maybe a story

will help.

In the first century, when a king would win a battle that was far away from his kingdom, he didn't have of course the modern technologies that we have today; he sent a messenger back home to the kingdom to share the good news of what it is that was happening — that the enemy had been defeated and that their lives had been saved. And without any prompting, the people who had heard that good news broke into celebration and they anticipated the moment in which the king and the soldiers would return home. And you know what they did. They organized a parade. They brought in the greatest musicians. They whipped up the most wonderful food. They wanted to throw the biggest party that the city had ever seen because of what the king and the soldiers had accomplished. He's won a victory for them, and the only response that they could imagine would be to do the very best that they could to honor what it is that he had accomplished.

In a very real sense, the Lord Jesus Christ has done just that, brothers and sisters. He's a King who went to us and He won a victory that we could not win. He was the one who conquered sin and death. He was the one who paid that penalty on the cross. He's that one that we know who is coming back once again to receive us as His bride. And the only response to that kind of amazing news is one where we want to throw a parade and strike up the band and throw a feast. We want to do all the preparation that we can to honor this King and to befit ourselves as those who have truly received the victory that has been announced.

TRAINED FOR GODLINESS AND GOOD WORKS

And to be honest, all of what I just described sounds wonderful but it's a lot of hard work. Putting on a parade is not easy and I don't have to tell any of you that having a lot of people over to your house and being hospitable is challenging. The process of organizing an event and really honoring someone is going to require tremendous effort. It's going to require training. The recognition is that in embracing that good news and coming to the knowledge of what it is that Jesus has done, springs us into motivation and action. But over time, it can sometimes dull in our hearts. You know let a year go past that victory and some more difficulties come into that country and all of a sudden everybody forgets what had happened. They don't remember the news anymore, and what was an exciting moment, has now become a kind of “grin and bear it” obligation. This is why this word, training, teaches us that we have to go deeper into grace and continue to explore the richness of God's grace, because as we do, we are motivated unto greater heights of obedience to the will of Christ to increased joy but at times it's going to be difficult; it's going to be challenging. That word, training, actually means “to provide instruction with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior.” I don't know if you have ever tried to create a good habit, but it doesn't happen overnight. It's very difficult.

Some of you, for instance, amaze me; you absolutely astonish me. You know who you are — you marathon runners! You absolutely amaze me. You run lengths of distance that should never be humanly possible and then you come back to the rest of us and you tell us you enjoyed it! And you're going to do it again and again! I don't believe you, by the way. I have tried it; it's not fun. It's not fun! Now if you are training for a marathon, the recognition is that you're going to have to know and believe certain things about running and you're going to have to perform. You're going to have to do it. You're going to have to know things about nutrition and hydration and pacing and clothing. You're going to have to know all the tips of what it's like to pace through a lengthy run. But here's the recognition. You could know all those things and not be a marathon runner. You can graduate from "Marathon 101" class and have entirely aced the test and have all of the equipment, but if you walk out the front door and tell me you're a marathon runner I'm going to laugh at you because it's really different knowing everything and not performing what it is that you know.

It's really no different in Christianity. Jesus tells us that there will be those who say, "Lord, Lord," and He'll say, "Depart from Me because I never knew you. It's those who do the will of My Father, it's those who have been so transformed by the announcement of the news and the message and the content of what it is that I have given to you in Christ and you've been dazzled by its beauty that you've now been motivated unto godliness, you've disciplined yourself for the purpose of godliness," he says, "it's that person who's really gotten the Gospel. It's that person who is not just simply interested in what it is they receive from Christ but they have been captivated by Christ and now He's the most beautiful things they've ever laid their eyes on and they cannot imagine not giving all of themselves for Him because He gave all of Himself for them."

You see, that's what it's like to work in a discipline. If you're going to be a chef, you're going to work in the discipline of cooking. If you're going to be a doctor, if you're going to be a doctor, you're going to work in the discipline of medicine. And to do that, you're going to have to say "No" to certain things and you're going to have to say "Yes" to certain things. This is part of the reason I'm not a marathon runner. Some of the things that you guys say "No" to, I really want to say "Yes" to, you know, like Krispy Kreme donuts and steak. And the things that you're saying "Yes" to, like, well, like running, I'm not saying "Yes" to, you see. The recognition is, in the Gospel, you begin to gather a taste as you walk in the training of grace where your eyes have been captivated by the beauty of Christ and you are now willing to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions in order to say "Yes" to self-control and godliness because you want nothing more than to be just like your Savior. You see, this is how grace trains you. The more you drink it in, the more your will is captivated, the more you want to say "Yes" to what it is that Jesus would call you to. That's the spirit of a disciple. Now Hebrews tells us that discipline is painful for a season. It's not as if you're going to just roll out of bed and it's going to happen. Discipline is painful for a season, but in the end, it yields the fruitful harvest of righteousness.

I had the joy on Friday night of listening to a great musician by the name of Michael Card, who many of you will know. We had the privilege of hosting him at our church. And as I was sitting at his feet listening to him play, I was reminded of the fact that I want to play the guitar because he played so well. You've been with that person who is almost effortless in their abilities with music. They're like one with the instrument. It seems like it would be so simple, and then you try, and it's incredibly difficult. As I was sitting there I'd think, "Okay, this is years, it's years of saying 'Yes' to blisters on the end of his finger and expensive cost of lessons and many nights of wanting to give up, but with a dream of a vision of being a musician and with a passion for the discipline of music, so much so that he was willing to say 'No' to all of the other things people were doing so that he could say 'Yes' to the thing that he believed God had called him to." And then I was reminded why I'm not a guitar player.

The realization is that it's no different from our walk with Christ. We reveal, with our time, our energy, our resources, what it is that we've really committed our lives to. We've living expressions of what it is that we're committed to. And so when we ask the question, "What about your life is the aroma of the Lord Jesus Christ that makes it unmistakable that you are one of His disciples?" do you know what Jesus actually might say? "Making disciples." Do you see? You'll get to know missionaries, but right now I see a lot of missionaries. Missionaries are not just those that you send overseas and live on fundraising and have committed themselves vocationally. According to the Lord Jesus, with the very final words ringing in the ears of His disciples as He ascends into the heavenly places is He says, "Go and make disciples." If final words are important, if deathbed words are important, if the last thing you want someone to hear is important, then that is crucially important and He's saying it to all of us in this room. And so the beginning place of actually making disciples is seriously considering, "Are you a disciple? Is it unmistakable? Is the commitment clear? Is the recognition that this is indeed who Jesus has called you to be, this is who He's made you to be?"

TRAINED TO WAIT FOR THE APPEARING OF CHRIST'S GLORY

You see, if you love the master of the discipline, then you love the discipline of the master. If you love the Jesus who's called you into the work of discipleship and to the call of making disciples, if you love that Jesus you'll love the discipline that He puts you through, you'll love the conformity that it requires because you've seen the vision, you've seen what it is that your chief end is — to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever — and you're willing to stop at nothing until the Lord has every single ounce of who you are. Friends, that's what Missions Conference is about. It's about the Lord stirring in your heart and in my heart a focus upon what life is all about and to give you the confidence to open your mouth, maybe for the very first time, and to share with that neighbor, who is clearly hurting and who has looked for hope in every other place, to speak to that

college student who you know has derailed spiritually like the campus minister friend of mine, speak to that family member, to take that young person aside. Where are you going to get the courage and the confidence to love people to such a degree that you're willing to take godly risks that Christ might be formed in them? Only if you're a disciple of Christ and if He has become the chief treasure of your life.

Do you see, Michael Card was willing to commit all of that time and energy to playing music because the cost was worth the treasure that he was after. You've been so enamored and so overcome and so enthralled with something that you'd be willing to do anything in order to get it — I don't know, like sell a field, as Jesus tells us. To sell everything you have to buy the field to get the jewel that's buried in the ground that no one sees. To sweep the whole house in order to find the coin that's been lost because that's the one thing that you want to commit your life to. Jesus has delivered you in order to deploy you into the work of being and making a disciple. Are you ready for that work? Are you ready to walk that path?

If that campus minister were here today he would ask you those questions. And if you feel a restlessness in your soul, and maybe even a frustration for being challenged, know that in this moment something important is happening. The Spirit of God is making Himself plain to you. Don't reject His wooings. Don't reject His drawings towards you in grace. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to say "Yes" to His call and to quit being successful at the things in life that do not matter and start finding meaning exactly where Jesus has placed it — in the Gospel of Jesus Christ for a dying world longing to live. And you're His epistle! You're His witness! And so before we talk about making disciples, let's talk about being disciples, and in being disciples let's trust the Lord Jesus that through us He'll accomplish everything that He has determined, for in the discipline of godliness, He will a fruitful harvest of righteousness. He is the Lord of the harvest and He tells us the fields are white, that the laborers are few. And it's my prayer today that there might be a few more. Let's pray He'll do that.

Father in heaven, this is Your Word, this is Your challenge. This is Your work. This is not a work that we can do. You have called us into something that we have no power to accomplish. That's exactly where You want us. You want us, in faith, stripped of earthly confidences and competences, full of divine dependence, that we might, in beholding the face of Christ, as beggars who found bread, lead other beggars to where they can be fed, even the Lord Jesus Christ. So Christ Jesus, even as You have fed us now from Your Word, we ask, through the deliverance of Your Gospel, in every soul in this room, deploy us for the work of ministering that we might be unmistakable to a watching world. We are Your disciples and we are committed to Your work — the work of making disciples. And we are waiting for the day of the appearing of Your glory. And until then, we will work, for the day is short and the need is great and the hour is upon us. Lord Jesus, work. We ask it in Your precious name, amen.

Let's stand and sing together hymn number 449, "We Rest On Thee." We'll sing together stanza one.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

©2013 First Presbyterian Church.

This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template.

Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any website error to be with the webmaster/transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker. For full copyright, reproduction and permission information, please visit the First Presbyterian Church Copyright, Reproduction & Permission statement.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).