

Titus 2:9-15

In these few verses, we've got a description of what a true Christian really is. This is such an important subject to understand, because so many people today aren't very clear about this at all. So if you don't know what a real Christian is, or are not sure, then this is exactly for you.

But, before we come to that, as an introduction into the subject, we've got verses 9 and 10. These verses speak of the relationship of slaves to their master. You might think this is irrelevant because we don't have slavery any more. But we still have an order in society, which God has ordained.

Romans 13:1

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

在上有权柄的，人人当顺服他。因为没有权柄不是出于神的。凡掌权的都是神所命的。

We're all in relationships with other people. The Lord has ordered society so that there will always be some people above us in status. Citizens to the government. Employees to their employer. Wives to their husband. Children to their parents. Everyone is in a position beneath somebody else.

This teaching about slaves and masters can be extended to all those relationships. How ought Christians react to anyone above them in status?

9 “Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them,”

劝仆人要顺服自己的主人，凡事讨他的喜欢。不可顶撞他。

10 “and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.”

不可私拿东西。要显为忠诚，以致凡事尊荣我们救主神的道。

First of all, we're told that we should be subject to them in everything.

But what if they ask you to do something you don't agree with? Well, we should try to explain our concerns if we can. If they listen to us, that's fine. You've helped them, and they'll appreciate it. But if they insist on asking you to do something you don't agree with, you must do it. That's what's being taught here. They are your superior. God has put them above you in status. You're not in charge, they are. You must do what they say.

But there's one exception: if they try to force you to sin. Only in that case, you

must resist and say, “No.” That will inevitably cause problems. You may get fired from your job, or, worse still, you might even be killed.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, tried to force all his citizens to bow down and worship a giant golden statue that he had made. Daniel had three friends who couldn't do that, because they only worshipped the One true living God. Nebuchadnezzar told them:

Daniel 3:15

“If you are ready to fall down and worship the image I have made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace.”

你们再听见角，笛，琵琶，琴，瑟，笙，和各样乐器的声音，若俯伏敬拜我所造的像，却还可以。若不敬拜，必立时扔在烈火的窑中，有何神能救你们脱离我手呢？

To which they replied:

Daniel 3:16-18

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold that you have set up.”

沙得拉，米煞，亚伯尼歌对王说，尼布甲尼撒阿，这件事我们不必回答你。即便如此，我们所事奉的神能将我们从烈火的窑中救出来。王阿，他也必救我们脱离你的手。即或不然，王阿，你当知道我们决不事奉你的神，也不敬拜你所立的金像。

Now, the Lord did save them miraculously from the fire, but they were prepared to die if that had been God's will instead. Notice they didn't try to rebel in any way. They simply took the unjust consequences of their action. Christians should never rebel against authority.

1 Samuel 15:23

“Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.”

悖逆的罪与行邪术的罪相等。

The Christian suffers for righteousness sake. If we do this, God will honour us, and keep us. Take Joseph for example. He hadn't actually done anything wrong. He was a righteous man, wrongly put in prison.

Genesis 39:20,21

“But while Joseph was there in prison, the Lord was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden.”

于是约瑟在那里坐监。但耶和华与约瑟同在，向他施恩，使他在司狱的眼前蒙恩。

Then through a remarkable series of events, which could only have been the Lord's working, he ends up saving Egypt and Israel from famine. So the Lord will keep His people, even when they're unjustly punished by their superiors.

So, ordinarily, we should always obey our superiors in everything, except when they try to force us to sin. Then we don't rebel, but take the unjust consequences.

Secondly, in this passage, we're also told that we're "*to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them.*" Naturally we're rebellious creatures. We don't want to be under anybody's authority. So, if we have to work for somebody else, our first instinct is to just do the minimum work necessary to get the money. And if bad things are said about our boss behind his back, we join in with it. If the opportunity arises to steal some money from him without anybody knowing, we'll do it. That's what everybody else is doing, so we start behaving like that ourselves.

But the Christian is not to behave like that. He's to do what's right, even if nobody's looking. We ought to behave in an honest, upright way at all times. This will be opposite to everybody else around us. But we need to shew that Christians can be fully trusted, even if the boss isn't watching. That's the Christian witness. "*that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.*"

This is a very important principle. It's what we are in our hearts that counts with God, not what we do outwardly. Anybody can put on an outward show of respectability or conformity. That's what most people are doing all the time. But their hearts are still corrupt. If they think they could get away with lying, or stealing or cheating on their wives, they'd do it. But a Christian's heart stops him from behaving like this. That's the fundamental difference between a real Christian and everybody else in the world. A real Christian has had his heart changed by God. This leads us directly on to verses 11 to 14, which, as I said, is a description of what it is to be a real Christian.

11 "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*"

因为神救众人的恩典，已经显明出来，

12 "*It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,*"

教训我们除去不敬虔的心，和世俗的情欲，在今世自守，公义，敬虔度日。

13 *“while we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,”*

等候所盼望的福，并等候至大的神，和（或作无和字）我们救主耶稣基督的荣耀显现。

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.”*

他为我们舍了自己，要赎我们脱离一切罪恶，又洁净我们，特作自己的子民，热心为善。

In verse 10, we see the word “*salvation*.” That’s the most important word of the Christian faith. We need to look into this in a lot more detail.

(1.) What are we saved from?

When we use the word “saved” or “salvation,” we understand that there’s a problem that we can’t save ourselves from, so someone else comes and rescues us. Suppose we’ve fallen from a boat and we can’t swim. We’re drowning in the water. We can’t save ourselves because we can’t swim. But someone else comes along and rescues us and brings us to safety. That person has “saved” our life. Our “salvation” has come from him.

Now, apply this to God and men. We’ve got a problem that we’re born with, that we can’t save ourselves from. God comes along and rescues us, just like the rescuer with the drowning man. God rescues us from our problem.

In v.14 we see that we are rescued “*from all wickedness*.” That’s our problem by nature. That’s what all of us need to be saved from. The wickedness of our own hearts. So, firstly, we have to see our need of being saved at all.

Most people don’t see a problem. They just don’t see a need to be saved from the wickedness of their own hearts at all. Men invent all sorts of philosophies and religions, to try to explain why the world is so evil. If people can surround themselves with like-minded people who all have the same religion or philosophy, they can ignore the real problem in their own heart altogether.

That’s what people do. It’s easy to follow a crowd. It’s safe. If we follow the crowd, we can have a huge social life with people who are like-minded. That’s the easiest thing in the world to do. And so most people just go along with the majority around them.

They either do one of two things, depending on their surroundings. They either suppress any idea of God’s existence completely out of their minds, or, in some more religious societies, they live for another god or gods which their ancestors have invented, and which are easier to deal with than the true God. This isn’t difficult to do. Nobody can see God. Just follow what everybody around is doing. It’s easy.

Naturally, we don't want the true God to exist. We want to be independent. We want to be in charge of our own lives. The idea of an all-powerful Creator God, who hates sin, and who judges the world, we don't want to hear about. Because we'd be found guilty, and we'd rather go on in our sins.

But God has put inside all of us a conscience. Look what your conscience is telling you. Don't just ignore it by listening to the people around you. They don't know anything.

We need to come to understand and acknowledge the fundamental problem with the human heart. We're all evil by nature.

Genesis 6:5

"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

耶和華見人在地上罪惡很大，終日所思想的盡都是惡。

Jeremiah 17:9

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

人心比萬物都詭詐，壞到極處，誰能識透呢？

Matthew 15:19,20

"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him unclean."

因為從心里發出來的，有惡念，凶殺，奸淫，苟合，偷盜，妄証，謗？這都是污穢人的。至于不洗手吃飯，那却不污穢人。

In this passage, Christ confronted the church leaders of His day. They thought that the difference between clean and unclean was simply to do with outward things. But Christ tells them it's the heart that's the problem. It doesn't matter how much anyone seems to be a nice person on the outside. It's in their heart where the real problem lies. And every one of us has a wicked heart by nature.

Our hearts are not something that anyone can see, until outward circumstances stress us enough to expose the problem. Do you have a bad temper? Do you hate somebody in your heart? Do you lust after other women apart from your wife? Are you tempted to steal from your employer, or the taxman? Do you lie to people? Do you secretly covet your neighbour's property? Or his wife? Well, that's most of the ten commandments broken. I suggest we break all ten of them on a regular basis in our hearts. Christ said:

Mark 12:30,31

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."

你要尽心，尽性，尽意，尽力，爱主你的神。其次，就是说，要爱人如己。再没有比这两条诫命更大的了。

That's the standard God requires. He's a holy God. The more we think about it, the more we ought to realise how far short we fall from this standard. It's our evil hearts we need to be saved from, even if our evil thoughts and desires are never expressed outwardly. And only God can do this.

(2.) There is going to be a judgment

God is a God of perfect justice. We must be judged and we'll be found guilty.

2 Corinthians 5:10

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

因为我们众人，必要在基督台前显露出来，叫各人按着本身所行的，或善或恶受报。

Psalms 130:3

"If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?"

主耶和华阿，你若究察罪孽，谁能站得住呢？

We're all responsible to God. It is to Him we'll give an account, not men.

Romans 14:12

"So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."

这样看来，我们各人必要将自己的事，在神面前说明。

When we see murderers or child abusers getting away with their crimes, we're rightly horrified. God has put a sense of justice in all of us.

And we see many crimes on this earth that are never punished, and many innocent people punished unjustly. This all seems so unfair. But we shouldn't worry. God is perfectly just. He hasn't forgotten. God can see our hearts. He will punish everyone with perfect justice eventually. But it'll be in the world to come, not here.

Justice is clearly not done on this earth. So therefore, for God to be perfectly just, which He is, there must be a life after death in which we'll all be judged in righteousness.

Hebrews 9:27

"Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."

按着定命，人人都有一死，死后且有审判。

Psalms 96:13

“He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His truth.”

他要按公义审判世界，按他的信实审判万民。

So, we can't escape these two facts: We're naturally born with wicked hearts, and there's going to be a judgment after death. If we're going to be saved at all from the judgment to come, then we have to be saved from our wicked hearts while we're still on this earth. And we can't save ourselves. That's the problem.

We could just sit back, do nothing, and ignore the problem altogether. But the Bible says that if we do that, we're condemned already. If we ignore any rescue plan from God, and especially if we rebel and fight against any rescue plan, we'll be condemned when God's judgment finally comes.

(3.) How are we saved?

If we are going to be saved at all, it will be by the grace of God.

v.11 “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.”

因为神救众人的恩典，已经显明出来，

We're all too keen to believe that God is a God of love and forgiveness, which He is. But God can't simply say, “Oh, I'll just forgive everybody.” There'd be no justice in that at all. Muslims believe that Allah is all-forgiving, but by that they mean he'll just let people off. They don't see a problem. But there's a huge problem in that way of thinking. Our God is a forgiving God, yes, but that can't possibly be at the expense of His justice. So we need to ask the question: How can God be just and merciful at the same time?

We're all guilty. But, how can God ever show mercy, when He can't avoid dealing with us in perfect justice? The only way that's possible, is for Him to punish the sins of His people in somebody else. And that is exactly why He sent our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into this world.

We see from verses 13 and 14 that:

“Jesus Christ.... gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness”

That's how God can be perfectly just and also merciful at the same time. God sent a Redeemer into the world to die in the place of His people, for their sins. Can't you see how wonderful this is? This was Christ's purpose, when He came into the world.

The Old Testament shows us that, from the very beginning of time, a blood sacrifice was needed to cleanse men from sin. An elaborate system of animal sacrifices was set up, by God, as a picture of this. Now, the Jews ended up thinking that these animal sacrifices actually took away their sins, but they were wrong. The animal sacrifices were only ever meant to be a picture of the one true sacrifice for sin that the Lord Jesus Christ came to make. He would

do this at one point in time for the sins of all His people throughout time. Now Christ has appeared in history, we don't need animal sacrifices any more as a picture. We simply look back to Him and His finished work on the cross.

Jesus Christ willingly gave Himself for His people. We are told that:

1 Peter 2:24

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed."

他被挂在木头上亲身担当了我们的罪，使我们既然在罪上死，就得以在义上活。因他受的鞭伤，你们便得了医治。

2 Corinthians 5:21

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

神使那无罪的（无罪原文作不知罪），替我们成为罪。好叫我们在他里面成为神的义。

No other religion involves a blood sacrifice that can truly turn away the anger of God. Other religions either think God just lets us off freely (which would be against His justice), or that we actually have the ability to do something ourselves to achieve God's favour. But we don't have that ability. Our hearts are evil. No amount of outward works could ever change an evil heart.

True believers in Christ know the evil of their own hearts. But they also know that they've been forgiven freely on the grounds of the blood of Christ.

1 Peter 1:18,19

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect."

知道你们得赎，脱去你们祖宗所传流虚妄的行为，不是凭着能坏的金银等物。乃是凭着基督的宝血，如同无瑕疵无玷污的羔羊之血。

(4.) How can we receive this salvation?

We could ask the question: Why has God bothered to save any of us? He never saved the wicked angels who fell, why should He bother with wicked men? Well, He didn't have to or need to. God could send all of us into hell-fire for ever right now, and He wouldn't have done anything wrong at all. We'd just get what we deserve for the sinfulness of our own hearts.

But, God placed His love on His people, which is a number that no man can number, because He had a purpose for them. We see this in v.14:

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.”*

他为我们舍了自己，要赎我们脱离一切罪恶，又洁净我们，特作自己的子民，热心为善。

God wants to purify a people for Himself, a people that are *“eager to do what is good.”* But we can't do good by nature, because of our evil hearts.

John 3:3

“I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

耶稣回答说，我实实在在地告诉你，人若不重生，就不能见神的国。

Ezekiel 36:26

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you an heart of flesh.”

我也要赐给你们一个新心，将新灵放在你们里面，又从你们的肉体中除掉石心，赐给你们肉心。

So we need a new heart. How do we get one? We can't make one ourselves. We need to cry to God for a new heart. He's the only one who can give us one. I know this sounds very simplistic, but, ask Him for one. Start praying. Start communicating with Him. You need to repent of your sins, and hate your own sinful nature before you can cry to Him for mercy. But He is a merciful God, and won't cast away any who call on Him in truth.

Psalms 145:18

“The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.”

凡求告耶和华的，就是诚心求告他的，耶和华便与他们相近。

If you haven't started a relationship with the Lord, start one now. Only then can He help you. He can give you a new heart. Recognise your need to be completely changed in your heart, in your innermost being. We must have this new heart in order to be saved from the judgment to come.

Once we've received this new heart, we then really do become *“eager to do good.”* We then get all the equipment necessary to live a *“self-controlled, upright and godly”* life in this world. Don't you want that? Aren't you sick of this life, and your old sinful heart? This is the only way.

As long as we have breath, God hasn't judged us yet. Let's all make sure that we get right with God. Begin a relationship with Him. Communicate with Him. Don't you want to love what's right, and hate what's evil? Or do you still want to continue in sin and destroy yourself?

(5.) What are we saved to?

12 “It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,”

教训我们除去不敬虔的心，和世俗的情欲，在今世自守，公义，敬虔度日。

Without the new heart, we'll always be dragged back into the “*ungodliness and worldly passions*” of our natural heart. And we won't be able to help ourselves. But with the new heart, we now have the power to say, “*No' to ungodliness and worldly passions.*” We must get this new heart. Only then can this bondage to sin be truly broken.

Of course, even the Christian backslides. I don't know whether you've noticed, but Christians aren't perfect. They'll never be perfect while they're on this earth. That's because the old heart is still there. The real Christian now has a battle going on within him between the old heart and the new heart. He never had this before. He really loves the new heart, and desires to follow it. That's his real self now. But the old heart keeps on dragging him back to sin. And whenever this happens, he hates it.

The new heart not only gives us the power to say “*No' to ungodliness and worldly passions,*” it also gives us the power and ability “*to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives,*” which we never had before. This is the pursuit of holiness that is the Christian life.

Romans 8:13

“For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

你们若顺从肉体活着必要死。若靠着圣灵治死身体的恶行必要活着。因为凡被神的灵引导的，都是神的儿子。

And the real Christian also has the assurance that one day this struggle with sin and his old heart will finally be over. After death he will be given a new body that will no longer be able to sin any more. That's the blessed hope of the Christian.

13 “while we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,”

等候所盼望的福，并等候至大的神，和（或作无和字）我们救主耶稣基督的荣耀显现。

One day, Christ is going to come back again.

He came the first time to save people:

John 12:47

"I did not come to judge the world but to save it."

我来本不是要审判世界，乃是要拯救世界。

He'll come a second time to judge the world:

Acts 17:31

"He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead."

因为他已经定了日子，要借着他所设立的人，按公义审判天下。并且叫他从死里复活，给万人作可信的凭据。

In this period we're in, between Christ's first and second coming, there's opportunity to be saved before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

Everyone who doesn't trust in the salvation Christ offers the world will go to eternal punishment. Which is just what all of us deserve anyway. But those who hunger and thirst after righteousness in this world, and who do embrace the salvation Christ came to give, and who do call on the Lord and receive the new heart, will go to everlasting glory.

Daniel 12:2

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."

睡在尘埃中的，必有多人复醒。其中有得永生的，有受羞辱永远被憎恶的。

Matthew 25:46

"Then they [the wicked] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

这些人要往永刑里去。那些义人要往永生里去。

Where will you be for eternity? We only have this one life to get things right with God.

It is a narrow path that leads to life, because it goes against the crowd. But it is worth it in the end.

Matthew 7:13,14

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

你们要进窄门。因为引到灭亡，那门是宽的，路是大的，进去的人也多。引到永生，那门是窄的，路是小的，找着的人也少

Let's all make sure that we renounce the world and its wicked ways, and begin our journey on the narrow way that leads to life.

That is what true Christianity is all about.

15 "These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you."

这些事你要讲明，劝戒人，用各等权柄责备人。不可叫人轻看你。