

EHC Week 11
Slow Down to Go Forward
Titus 2:11-14
07/31/22

Introduction

Pray. Titus 2:11-14.

RECAP OF SERIES

Believe it or not we have reached the end of our series on the Emotionally Healthy Church. We've covered a ton of ground in the past 11 weeks.

- **Defining emotional maturity** - having the right emotion, at the right time, with the right amount, for the right duration, because of the right reason - namely, love.
- **4 essential movements** - up, in, back, out
- **Last 5 weeks - specific emotions:** Fear, Jealousy, Anger, Shame, Loneliness
- **Initiatives:** Redemption | Book Clubs | Morning Prayer

I hope it's been a blessing

Tonight my goal is to just help us tie a bow on the whole thing, I want to end with one more movement necessary for emotional health.

We must slow down to go forward.

Grandma O. I was in Minnesota for a funeral this past week where a lot of my extended family lives. And while I was there I got to go visit my grandpa. He's in a recovery facility right now because he fell and broke his hip a few weeks ago. And while we were there I asked my grandma - how long do you think he'll be in here? This is a hard situation. She's living at home, visiting with him during the days, he has to stay here. How long is that going to last? How long until he's healed?

And her response was so fitting for Grandma Olson with her little Midwestern accent, she said - **"Oh, well you know how it is Tim. We don't really know how long it'll be. These things just take time."**

And I thought about that as I was flying home and thinking about this sermon - how fitting of a statement for how I want us to close this series:

We did the sermons. We did Redemption. We did the book clubs and the morning prayer times...and we can find ourselves tempted to ask this sort of question → How long until I'm emotionally healthy and mature? How long until I experience freedom from this pain, or this struggle? **How long until I'm healed?**

And my encouragement for us tonight would be this → **"Oh well you know how it is Church. We don't really know how long it'll be. These things just take time."**

We must slow down to go forward.

Now if you're wired anything like me...need for instant. Need for immediacy and quick fixes – that statement is awful, right?

I want it now. With everything in my life.

- Food? Now.
- Getting to my destination? Now.
- Emotional health and maturity? Now.
- Holiness? Now.
- Healing to my emotional problems, sin patterns, relational problems, my past...now.

BUT → Discipleship to Jesus, Spiritual Formation, Emotional Maturity is a slow process.

And when we don't get this → we can live in a constant state of disillusionment, unrest, or frustration, actually keeping ourselves from the very tools God has given us to grow us in the first place.

Here's what I mean...this is from Bill Hull, guru on all things discipleship - **"A very common question to any plan for spiritual formation among church members is, 'How can we speed this up?' The consumer culture in which we live is a world of consumption, assertiveness, speed, and fame. Impatience is the most accepted sin in Western culture...The problem with impatience is that it short-circuits the forming of Christ in persons. With a consumer mentality, there is no basis to enter into a life of submission and humility...They begin to believe that if they can get a handle on this character flaw of uncontrolled anger in the next two months, it will be taken care of. If it doesn't work, then they need to find a better teacher, church, curriculum, husband, wife, or workplace. Changing my circumstances will change me."**

Maybe you find yourself in this spot:

- Maybe you started a new **Bible reading plan or prayer plan** and you're 3 weeks in and it feels dull and lackluster and unhelpful, and you're ready to give up and try something new.
- Maybe you've been in a **Community Group** for 2 years, still struggling with the same sin patterns and tendencies or you haven't connected with the other members like you want, and you're thinking - maybe the problem is that this group just doesn't work for me.
- Maybe you signed up for **Redemption** with a particular pain point in mind. Now the 7 weeks are wrapping up and you're frustrated that you still feel pretty similar to how you did going into Redemption. Now you're thinking - "Maybe the problem was with the program. I should try something else that will bring results."
- Maybe you **came to Jesus and put your faith in Him 15-20 years ago** thinking that you would never feel anxious, or depressed, or alone ever again - He has peace that passes understanding - and now you're struggling with those same feelings you were before Christ, and you're wondering if this whole Jesus thing is even real?

If only, man, can you imagine how easy my job would be if I could preach one sermon series, have one counseling session, one coffee with someone in our church and suddenly all their problems and patterns of sin are done away with? Being a pastor would be the easiest job on the planet!

But that's not how it works. And our insistence or belief that it does or should happen that way is actually a barrier to us being formed into the image of Christ at all!

Because everything that is mature takes time. We need to slow down. Play the long game of discipleship + emotional maturity. And here's the good news for us this evening → **This is the invitation of the Scriptures.**

Walkthrough of Titus 2

Turn over with me now to **Titus 2**.

CONTEXT – Titus is considered one of the “pastoral epistles (letters)”. It’s a letter written from Paul to a young pastor named Titus, helping him think through some things in ministry - how to raise up elders, how to teach God’s Word, how to shepherd and lead the Church.

At the beginning of chapter 2 Paul is laying out for Titus specific things he should urge various folks in his church to grow in. He’s got some commands for older men, older women, younger men, and younger women.

He’s laying out basically what is a path for their holiness and spiritual and emotional maturity. Here’s some ways that specific people in the church can and should grow more and more to become like Jesus. It’s not unlike what we do when we open up the Scriptures every Sunday and have been doing for this whole series → Here’s what it looks like for you to be an emotionally and spiritually and holistically mature follower of Christ.

But then he gets to verse 11, and that’s where I want us to be this evening as we consider the long game of emotional maturity in Christ.

JUSTIFICATION

He writes...

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

God’s grace appeared, in flesh. Jesus, God’s Son. Fully God. Became fully man. Entered into humanity.

While we were → Sinners, enemies, rebellious, crooked in our very nature, Christ came. He lived a perfect life that you and I could not and cannot live, yet he went to a horrific death on an ancient torture device known as a cross.

Why? **Paul tells us - to bring salvation for all people.** That all who would believe in Christ Jesus, because of and through the grace of God - would have salvation. We would be saved from our sins and brought into a relationship with God.

Our sin had created a debt before God that we could not pay. Evil and wickedness and unjustness deserve a penalty - it deserves death. We deserved to remain spiritually dead. But Jesus comes, takes our sin on the cross, dies, rises again and gives us His righteousness.

The Biblical term for this is **justification - through faith in Jesus - God takes our sin and gives us Christ’s righteousness.**

That’s how the Christian life begins - the grace of God in the person and work of Jesus - his life, death, and resurrection - that by faith makes us right with God.

If you are a follower of Jesus - that is the greatest reality of your life - you are now and forever **positionally righteous and holy before God.**

Justified in an instant.

Completely as a work of God through and through. He saves us. He makes us right with himself. All God and His grace.

But then Paul says that this grace does something else. Not only does it bring salvation. Make us positionally righteous before God but then look at what it does...

SANCTIFICATION

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...

The grace of God appeared and it brought salvation! But it also *trains us, instructs us, teaches us and shows us.*

Trains us to do what?

Renounce:

Ungodliness and worldly passions. We put off what the Scriptures name as the old self. Before we knew Jesus we had certain desires, certain wants, certain passions - the grace of God appears, it teaches us to more and more say "no" to those things.

And...

Live:

- **Self-controlled** - Sober. Just grounded in reality. All series long we've been saying part of living as an emotionally mature follower of Jesus is learning to live more and more in reality. In what is real and true.
- **Upright** - Righteous. A life set apart for God.
- **Godly** - Godward and God-like. A life that looks like Jesus.

This is what Paul is trying to get across to Titus and to us in verses 11-12 → God's grace has appeared, and for all who trust in Christ (1) we are justified. Declared right with God. and now (2) we are being **sanctified**.

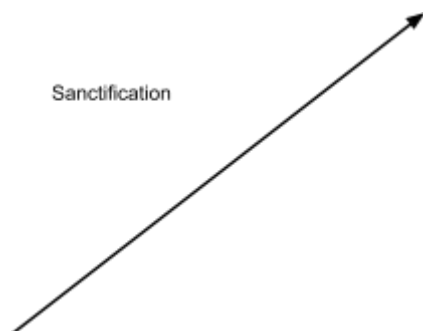
Sanctification → The process by which, by the grace of God, we say "no" to sin and "yes" to God more and more.

We were made positionally righteous, now the entirety of the Christian life is learning how to live righteously. How to live in light of what is true about us - that we are sons and daughters of God.

More and more growing into spiritually, emotionally, and holistically mature and healthy people.

Here's how I would say it → **Justified in an instant. Sanctified over a lifetime.**

Now, you might be on board with this reality, but here's the deal. When we hear this, and when we think about the Christian life, we often think it should go like this:



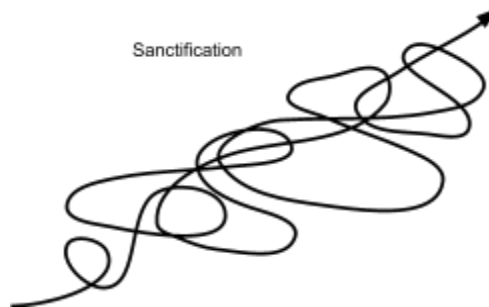
One constant, upward trajectory. God's grace has appeared, I've believed in Jesus. I should just constantly look more and more like Him.

The problem is that that is not reality. That's not the pattern or example of the Scriptures. That's not the reality of our lives.

In reality, sanctification is much more:



Or let's be real:



I think Peter, the disciple of Jesus, is a great living example of this.

We would all love to say we walk with Jesus like Peter right? One of the disciples. One of the core 12. Even one of the inner 3. We'd all agree Peter was a godly man, right?

But think about his life:

- Invited into a life of discipleship by Jesus (Matt 4) (Looks a little bit different pre-cross and resurrection but is invited to be a disciple - much like Christ's invitation to us)
- Tries to walk on water...and nearly drowns (Matt 14)
- Gets rebuked by Jesus. Jesus calls him satan. (Matt 16)
- Confesses Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God (Matt 16)
- Bold at the last supper - I'll never deny you (Matt 26)
- Denies Jesus 3x (Matt 26)
- Jesus reinstates him into ministry (John 21)
- Preaches the pentecost sermon - 5,000 get saved (Acts 2)
- Rebuked by Paul for ostracizing Gentile believers (Gal 2)

- Tradition → crucified upside down for preaching the gospel

This is the journey of the Christian life. Justified in an instant. Sanctified over a lifetime.

Emotionally Maturity is a Long Game

What does this mean, for us, for this series as we close? I think it means this:

Emotional Maturity, like all parts of our sanctification, is a long game.

We need to slow down to go forward. Because everything that is mature takes time. This is a life long, slow, painful, tedious, monotonous process.

And there are times where we have a particular Sunday Gathering experience, or a distinct time with Jesus, or a CG meeting, some kind of mountain top moment with the Lord and it feels like - "yes, everything is clicking". And those moments are going to come, hopefully they are a part of your Christian experience and how the Lord has shaped you in the past and will shape you in the future.

But so much of this Christian life, so much of sanctification is just little bit by little bit, 2 steps forward, a step and 1/2 back.

And so I just felt pressed to push us as a church, and encourage us from Titus 2 as we close this series and the summer → **Let's slow down to go forward.**

What does this look like, what does this mean? I think three things:

1. Patience.

Harper + Wait with joy? (if time).

We need patience. Waiting with joy as we create space in our lives for God to work in us and make us more like Jesus.

Don't let our culture of immediacy make you throw in the towel. Be patient. God is working a harvest. Those who sow to righteousness will reap. Now, let's make sure we're sowing to righteousness (talk about that more in a second), but let's be patient as we do.

Patience is necessary. Training us. It's an ongoing reality. Little bit by little bit by little bit. God I know you're working in me. It may not be as fast as I like, it may not be as easy as I'd like - but I trust you. I know you're shaping me more and more to look like Jesus. Help me to be patient.

But not patience that just sits on its hands and waits. Patience mixed with...

2. Perseverance.

Justification - being declared righteous - is completely a work of God. He saves us. He forgives us. He makes us clean. It's all Him. Sanctification is a work of God and man. We create space in our lives for God to work in us to make us look more like Jesus.

And here is where that quote we started with from Bill Hull is so important as we consider Titus 2 - because we're training. We don't throw everything we know out for some bigger, better, faster 2 weeks in. It's the small stuff.

How do you grow in anything you want to do? By showing up and putting in effort over and over and over again. You want to get good at a sport or an instrument, what do you need? Repetition. The same thing over and over and over again. Training over the long haul.

What does it look like to persevere in our part of sanctification? Doing the same things we know to do over and over and over again.

- We show up on **Sundays** to worship God over and over and over again.
- We show up to **group** and engage with the Bible and other believers over and over and over again.
- We do the regular and intentional **spiritual practices** (Bible, Prayer, Sabbath, Fasting) over and over and over again.

Even when we don't see "immediate results". Even when they feel pointless. Even when it feels like - man is this actually helping me grow into an emotionally and spiritually mature person at all?

Dennis Okholm - "We often want the painless quick fix in our sanctification, like a guilt-free diet that demands no sacrifice or the PowerBar that will give us the carbs we need for the next half-hour's activity. We have become consumers of religion rather than cultivators of a spiritual life. As if we believed the infomercial that promises great abs if we just buy the right piece of equipment for \$39.95, we think that the secret to being a spiritually fit Christian can be had by finding some secret technique or buying the most recent hot-selling inspirational devotional. Maturity in the Christian life does not come in these ways...[There is no] substitute for the unspectacular training and diet that we must engage in if we are going to become mature Christians."

We keep doing the small acts of faithfulness over and over and over again. That is perseverance. We just keep showing up. Even when it's slow. Even when it's hard. Even when it's mundane. Even when it feels pointless. We just keep showing up.

3. God's Grace.

All growth in the Christian life is a work of God's grace. God's grace is not just a past reality that at one point makes us Christians and saves us...it is also a present reality that trains us for holy living with God.

Paul tells Titus → It is God's grace that trains us for holiness.

This is why we continually say as a Church → **You never move past the gospel. You never move past the grace of God.**

The gospel, this good news of the grace of God is not just the ABCs of the Christian faith, it is the A to Z. It is the power of God not just for salvation, but for all of life with God. We need the grace of God, not just to *start* a life with Jesus, but for all of life as an apprentice to Him.

Galatians 3, Paul says it this way → 2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

I love Paul sometimes. "You idiots. You were saved and justified by God's grace! Do you really think He's going to leave you to figure out the rest on your own!?! What are you, dumb???"

He loves you! He wants you to look like Jesus! Which is good news because that means it's not all up to us! It's all a mystery of God's grace. We work hard, absolutely. We train. Absolutely. But God works in us to make us more and more like His Son!

In fact, here's a crazy beautiful reality - **God is more committed to us looking like Jesus than we are!**

Imagine that! God is after our growth even more than we are! God wants you to be emotionally and spiritually mature even more than you do!

What hope!!

Justified in an instant. Sanctified over a lifetime. All a work of God's grace.

But there's one more beautiful promise for us.

Gospel Conclusion

13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 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.

Church - this is your blessed hope. As you wrestle with anger, with envy, with loneliness, with fear, with shame, with doubt, with grief, with hurt....**One day, Jesus is going to return.**

Right now, he's at the right hand of God. Sitting on His throne, ruling over the earth. Winning people, by the power of the Spirit, to relationship to Himself. And one day → He's going to return. There will be an appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior. Jesus will come back!

And when he returns, the promise for the believer is called **glorification**. We will be **glorified**.

We will have fullness of beauty and perfection as we stand before the throne of God claiming Jesus on our behalf. We will have resurrected bodies (not just souls) that are perfected. God will remove all of our sin from our life and our hearts, so not only will we be declared righteous (as we were when we became Christians) but we will be righteous. We will be faultless before and with God for eternity.

Justified in an instant. Sanctified over a lifetime. Glorified for eternity.

God will finish the work. God has justified us. God is sanctifying us. God will glorify us. This is a guarantee.

- The work He began in you - drawing you to Himself. Saving you by grace through faith in Christ. Washing you clean from sin. Calling you son or daughter of Him - adopting you into His family.
- He will continue that work as he shapes you and sanctifies you by His grace in tandem with your perseverance.
- That work will be completed - meaning one day you will stand before the throne not just holy in standing, but holy through and through.

So be patient. Persevere. Look to the grace of God. **Slow down to go forward.**

Communion. Pray.