

Indexed

Scripture: Titus 2:11-15.

Topic: Declare These Things.

Text: Titus 2:15a -- "~~Declare~~
these things; exhort and reprove
with all authority."

Proposition: A sincere christian has
a joyous faith and message which he
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world.

Dates written: December 14-22, 1962.

Dates and places used:

Dec. 23, 1962 - Montrose, Colo.

Dec. 10, 1967 - Alamosa, Colo.

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[Faint, illegible handwritten notes]

Introduction:

1. Everyday we read or hear about the great dangers to the world's people. Nuclear warfare is probably the most feared of all the horrors about which we are told. "CBR warfare" composed of chemical, biological and radiological weapons, is almost as fearsome and gruesome.

2. Our news reporters tell us of mounting rates of divorce, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, crime of all sorts. We often feel as if things are really getting bad.

3. Accident, sickness, bereavement, loss of a job, or business failure hit most people at some time. At such times it is hard not to be despondent and despairing.

4. Amid such circumstances as these it is not unusual to wonder about the fate and destiny of mankind. A frequent result of such reflection is to say despairingly, "What has the world come to?"

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5. Years ago, when from our standpoint things shouldn't have seemed as bleak as they do now,

a minister at Oxford, England, dealt with this question, of despair. He said that instead of saying, "What has the world come to?" a christian ought to exclaim, "Consider what has come into the world!" Such a christian remark would be referring to ~~Jesus~~ Christ, of course, as the important "what" that has come into the world. At this christmas season this is exactly where the emphasis is: on the fact that Christ has come into the world. In the person of Christ what has happened, what is new, what has come? This is the direction we will follow in our meditation today. It is important to know all we can about him.

I. Christ has made possible changed lives, and eternal salvation for all.

1. The old-fashioned revival services emphasized this aspect of our faith, that Christ is a savior. At these services people were urged to repent of their past wrongs, to put their faith in Christ, to let him come into their hearts. Then came a joyful and emotional expression of assurance that the sinner was indeed saved and converted. It was expected

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that the genuineness of the conversion would be demonstrated by subsequent ~~lives of~~ righteous, dedicated christian living. These characteristic christian deeds did not pay for ones conversion and salvation, but were natural acts of a changed will and desire. A converted person became good and kind because this was how he most wanted to be; not because he was trading good deeds for God's favor. Out of love and gratitude for the grace of God he did everything he could for his Lord.

2. This old-fashioned revival may have been too emotional for most of us today. We prefer to meet problems with our minds, to consider them in calmer, more-deliberate ways. An examination of the basic truths around which the revivals were built indicates that these concepts are logical, and that they are in accord with New Testament teachings. Whether you get there by a sudden, highly-emotional turning point experience, or through slower, deliberate, reasoning methods, acceptance of Christ and his teachings mark the major turning point in the life of an individual. Christ

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is the Son of God, is God incarnate --in the world in fleshly form at a given point in history. Christ said and demonstrated that God forgives past wrongs to those who repent of them, that he offers to the repentant a new and different life now, and that a delightful and wonderful life after death awaits those of christian faith. Such forgiveness, such love, such deliverance from wrong and from death, is a logical thing to expect from the one just and merciful God.

3. Most of us can think of people whose lives have been drastically and permanently changed by an acceptance of Christ. One person, whom I can remember well, spent a great amount of time and a large share of his income at bars and taverns. Perhaps one reason was to get away from his concern over his father. The father, a man who had been strong and active, was now suffering and slowly dying from muscular dystrophy. Because of this the ill man and his wife were living with the son and his family. The concern for his father, the tensions caused by conflicts between his parent and his family, and his natural liking

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for uninhibited talking were all among the influences that drove him to drink. His family began to suffer, as his money became less and less available for food, clothing, medical expenses, school costs, and even house payments. A new church was being organized in the neighborhood. The church's first building unit was erected with the help of voluntary labor from many men. The young man about whom we are talking was a good carpenter, when sober. Some ~~men~~ of the men of the church asked him to help. They joked that he could work in the church all right, because in his talk he used a lot of religious words. Of course, he arranged these words a bit differently from their normal church usage, so that women and children had to be kept out of earshot of him! Surprisingly, the young man did go to the church one night to help. Talking about it later, he said that there was no problem about thinning the paint they handed him, because he had so much paint thinner in him that all he had to do was to blow into the bucket! He enjoyed himself during the three or four hours of work that night. Later, at home, he realized that at the church he had been with a bunch of fellows

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who were fun, who seemed really to like him, and who didn't depend on the bottle or on foul language for their lift. Also, he felt some pleasure as the thought struck him that he had actually been in a church and it hadn't fallen down! What's more, because of him the church was in a bit better shape than when he entered it, thanks to his work. So the next time that one of the church fellows ran across him at work and asked him to help them work that night at the church he didn't hesitate at all in accepting. Before long he was showing up at the church on work nights without having to be asked or reminded. Based on his show of interest and initiative, some of the fellows invited him to a men's prayer and discussion group on a weeknight. He accepted the invitation. As he listened to their simple, straightforward, unaffected, natural statements about their own problems, as he heard them praying through Christ to God about the things that concerned them, and as he shared their moments of silence for prayer and meditation, he felt a new warmth within him. The following week under his own steam he appeared again at the group meeting. In a few weeks he

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felt close enough to the men to share his problems, to say why he had turned to such heavy drinking, to express his gratitude for their friendliness. He became even able to express something of this in prayer. Still later, he went to a church service with some of his prayer group partners. The next Sunday both he and his family showed up at the services, except for his Dad, who couldn't come, and for one of the family to stay with Dad. After a time he and his ~~family~~ wife and the older children professed their faith in Christ, took church membership training, and joined the church. Today this man and his wife have several years of active christian living and church leadership experience to their credit. They are leaders and workers in scouting, PTA and other worthy community activities, too. He says he couldn't go near a bar now if he wanted to: too many youngsters like and respect him to let them down. Besides, he doesn't have time to stop by a bar; and he thinks it's wrong and wasteful. His father passed away several years ago, with both the father and son having a strong confidence in the eternal happiness he would find

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in Christ where he was going.

4. Yes, Christ can and does change lives. Some of us know this from personal experience. Perhaps the time when Christ has the greatest meaning is when death ~~has~~ seems near to you or to a loved one. A close relative of an older person who was ill and very possibly dying, knew that her loved one was a person of strong christian faith. When a friend asked her why she didn't seem greatly concerned or grief-stricken over her dear one, she asked why should she? After all, who was more sure of salvation, who would be happier to meet her Lord, than her beloved mother? Yes, she would miss her, but she couldn't grieve too much, for mother would be happier in the next life than to continue now in her suffering.

5. Eternal salvation, and a changed life are gifts of Christ which are available for anyone who will believe and accept, as John 3:16 ~~p~~ points out so well. Before people can accept Christ's gifts they must know about them. This is where the

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II. Christians and their churches should spread the news of Christ.

1. Most churches are active in seeking new members. In fact, sometimes churches almost compete for the membership of the capable and active people of a community. This has ~~been~~ caused all too many people to feel that the church profits more by their membership than they themselves gain through the church. Thus many people have a patronizing manner toward the church. Because churches depend on their members and constituents for financial support it is ~~easy~~ too easy for their ^{and} leadership to become subservient to the better-to-do members. Also, it is too easy for the church merely to reflect the wishes of its members, even if they are unconnected with christian faith.

2. Such circumstances are regrettable, and unchristian. A church is an organization of people who believe in Christ as Lord and Savior for all mankind. We of the church worship God as we know him in Christ. When we seek out people in the name of the

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church, our chief and driving motive should be to acquaint these people with Christ, and to persuade them to believe in him too. We do this locally through evangelism and through christian education. Away from home, we seek to make Christ known through missions. The church that seeks out people because it wants to help them, and feels that it can help them, is in the pattern of Christ. A self-seeking church is not really a christian church.

3. A church is an organization of Christ-accepting individuals. Usually, by working together these individuals can accomplish more than by separate efforts. There are circumstances, however, when individual effort is the important thing. The man who invited his friend, whom we've discussed so fully earlier, to the church work party was necessary to winning him to christian faith. The individual is always important and necessary. Upon him and his efforts all depends. Each christian has an obligation to tell others about his faith, at opportune times. A christian of vital faith can hardly be kept from doing so, because his faith means

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so much to him that he wants to tell others.

4. The Scripture of today, Titus 2:11-15, points out this very thing, that it is the duty and pleasure of christians to make known their faith. The last verse of our Scripture, verse 15, is made up of these words: "Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." The authority mentioned here is not the type with which you teach and persuade a captive audience, such as in school or in the military service. It is, rather, the act of teaching and speaking as one who knows what he is talking about; as one who is an authority on his subject.

5. Preceding this command to tell what you know about Christ, the Scripture points out what the coming into the world of Christ has meant. "For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training them to renounce irreligion and worldly possessions, and to live sober, upright and godly lives in this world." (v. 11-12). This Scripture is one which in the lexicon or liturgy of some

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4. The Scripture of today, Titus 2:11-12, points out this very thing, that it is the duty and pleasure of Christians to make known their faith. The last verse of our Scripture, verse 12, is made up of these words: "Do clear these things; exert and remove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." The authority mentioned here is not the type with which you teach and persuade a captive audience, such as in school or in the military service. It is, rather, the act of teaching and speaking as one who knows what he is talking about; as one who is an authority on his subject.

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Conclusion: Let us summarise now:

1. There are many reasons why people might be unhappy and despondent. There is, however, an effective antidote or preventive for such despair and despondency. The solution the answer to these black problems is to be found in the fact that Christ has come into the earth.

2. When you accept Christ as the Son of God, as Savior, as example and guide, you do change, you are converted.

3. A sincerely-converted christian has a joyous faith and message which he wants to share. Therefore, in his own way he attempts to declare it to all the world.

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