

Meet Them Where They're At! (Titus 2:11-14)
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As Christians, we all should be focused on the eternal things, which are God, His word, and other people. The work of the gospel should extend to the outside world also, not just the four walls of the church building. Where ever you are, you should look for ways to love God and love people. This is why I began to serve at Portland Rescue Mission, which shows love to the homeless and the addicted. We meet them where they're at and walk with them at a pace they can sustain. We meet their immediate needs, helping them get food, shelter, and employment. However these temporal things are just the means to an end, which is spiritual restoration. We have a community called the Harbor, which develops a growth plan to save addicts and transform them spiritually. Christians are called to spread God's grace to those outside the church, and to help those within the church grow and be transformed by His grace, as one body.

In the book of Titus, Paul is writing to Titus, who is serving on Crete. He instructs Titus to oppose false teachers, to establish orderly conduct, and to teach the believers to align what they profess and what they practice. In chapters 2-3, Paul tells us we need to grow spiritually, and that this growth is motivated by gratitude for what Jesus has done for us. By His grace we are transformed, and we live to serve Him with gratitude wherever we are. The work of missions is putting our faith into practice. As we grow spiritually, we better reflect our Savior. We should draw others to Jesus and encourage those in the body of Christ to grow. All Christians are on missions as it should be a way of life.

In today's passage, Paul makes two points. First in v. 11, we see that God's grace invites all to be saved. We are called to draw all people to Jesus because the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all, and all have need of it. Now this grace doesn't mean a license to sin. We know from John 1:14 that Jesus came full of grace and truth. They go hand in hand. God's grace gives us more than forgiveness; it gives us victory over sin and grants a transformation that leads to righteousness. At the Portland Rescue Mission, we don't just provide for physical necessities, but we also provide accountability through the Harbor in order to encourage growth. God's grace invites us all to be saved, and to be changed. His grace is God's way of meeting us where we're at and wooing us into a relationship with Him. For those of us

who have experienced this transformative relationship with God, our gratitude should motivate us to talk about Jesus every day, so others can experience it too. We may be afraid, or think we are too ignorant or unskillful at evangelism. If you struggle taking this next step of faith, ask for God's help and you will receive it. If you received one billion dollars, would it change your life? Would you talk about it? How much more should we talk about the priceless eternal gift of God, which is worth infinitely more? So let us continue to pay attention to the eternal – to God, His word, and people.

The second point is that God's grace invites every saved person to be transformed (v. 12). The world tells us that we should make our lives as comfortable and convenient as possible. But Jesus tells us to take up our cross daily and follow Him, even though it is painful and inconvenient. This walk is motivated by gratitude for God's love, and it is one we take as individuals and together as the body of Christ. We help each other grow, to love God, and to love others. So what does this look like? It may be slow growth, like measuring a child's growth month by month. But don't think that you've reached maturity because that leads to complacency. We all should be continuously growing. Look back at the last year and see if you have become more like Jesus. It's easy to be complacent, and become focused on the material. But God loans these material things to us for eternal purposes. We must see the worth of the eternal just like we would recognize the worth of a gold bar. Do you value the people around you, those who are in need of Jesus? Hunter, a man at Harbor, used to be addicted to heroin. But through faith in Jesus and the support of brothers in Christ, he was transformed. And in turn he serves and encourages others to grow. This is what happens when we see the value of the eternal.

Verse 13 reminds us that Jesus is coming again. As we remember His first coming and hope for His second, we must focus on the eternal. Use what is temporal for eternal work. I even use the McDonald's I frequent as a place to evangelize to those around me. Wherever you are, there are people who hunger for the eternal, who need Jesus. In v. 14 Paul says we are zealous for good deeds because of the grace we have been given. God loved us, so in gratitude, loving God and loving others is our new way of life.