

Titus 2:11-15

The Reason For Holiness

We make so many mistakes as Christians. Living the life that God desires we live can be hard. But one of the biggest mistakes we can make is thinking that the life that God calls us to live is impossible.

It's easy to see all the standards in the Old Testament, the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament and believe that it's just impossible to match up. And then you come to church and the pastor rambles on about what you should and shouldn't do - which complicates this whole idea of Christian living even more.

This morning I want to share a message that each of us needs to hear regardless of where we are spiritually. This message applies if you are struggling with your faith, if your walking close to God, or if you're somewhere in between.

Our message this morning is on the wonderful grace of Jesus Christ.

We're in a series on the book of Titus.

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to his helper Titus. Titus was a fellow missionary with Paul to Ephesus and then Corinth. Titus was in Crete when he received this letter of instruction from his mentor.

We're going to look at the Book of Titus in a moment but first let's think about that question, how do we live the way God wants us to?

The Bible gives an answer that is totally unlike anything most people could even imagine. In fact, the Bible gives an answer that I think is totally unlike anything even most sincere Christians could even imagine.

The Bible's answer is the power of grace.

Let me give you a thumbnail definition of the concept of Grace. Grace is God's favor given to us when we really deserve His judgement.

Grace isn't merely God's pity or compassion. Grace isn't God setting aside His justice and simply ignoring our sins. Grace isn't God being so busy that we can slip our bad thoughts, words, or deeds past Him.

Someone said this -- "When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day's pay for his time, that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award--yet receives such a gift anyway--that's unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God."

Grace is about forgiveness of sin because the full penalty has been paid by another. If you don't catch this truth, you'll never understand grace: Sin can't limit God's amazing love, because sin isn't infinite. But, God's infinite justice restrains God's love.

The one thing that holds God's love back from us is His justice. God's law has been broken by every person in this room. The NT says: *the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*

Holiness means absolute purity. No taint of unrighteousness. You could take the best of the best when it comes to people on this earth and the Bible says we've: *all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God...*

And in fact we've fallen short of the glory of God by a long shot. We've all missed the mark of God's perfection and we're not even close. The biblical term is "sin."

God's infinite, perfect, righteous, lawful justice makes a demand. The wages of sin is death. Sin must be punished.

God's love was restrained by His own holiness. But God did what no human being could do. He made the way to satisfy His justice and free up His love.

I'd like you to see how He did it as we begin this morning.

Turn to I John 4 pg 1084

Here's where God's infinite love and perfect holiness come together.

Read vs 10

If you go to the National Association for Self-Esteem web site you can learn all about the importance of loving yourself. You can even take a *Self Esteem Self-Guided Tour - Rate Your Self Esteem.*

I took the test, although I don't recommend it, I didn't feel very good about myself afterwards. Just kidding!

But if the truth be told, we love ourselves. That's why we sin. That's why the world is such a mess. We love ourselves.

People with what would be classified as high self-esteem are very much in love with themselves. They are proud, confident and self-focused.

What's hard for people to see is that people with what would call low self-esteem also love themselves. They're introverted, always worried about what other people think of them. They're self-focused.

We all love ourselves in our own way.

Where does true love originate? Not with us. We don't have a clue.

Love originates with God. Here's how God loves: *He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Propitiation is a theological term that means "an atonement." "A satisfaction."

God's justice was satisfied by Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus died in our place, because of God's broken law.

God made a way to satisfy His own justice so His love could be set free. Grace is God freely showing His love to us because our sins were placed on Jesus at the cross.

Grace is free to us. That's what makes it grace. But what a price the Son of God paid. He paid it in suffering and shame so that God's love might be free to operate in grace!

The Bible says: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Grace is the vehicle that brings God's forgiveness. But grace means much more than just judicial forgiveness. Grace shapes how we live.

Grace is our teacher. I want us to see just what it is this morning that grace teaches us.
Go now to Titus 2 pg 1059

I honestly believe that Titus chapter 2 contains some of the most significant truths when it comes to living for God, that you'll find in the whole Bible.

I. God's Grace Teaches Us To Put Off Ungodliness

Read vs 11-12

I want you to encourage you to memorize these verses, underline them in your Bible, let them really sink down in.

Even though it's holy, just, and good, it isn't God's law that teaches us how to live. It isn't a list of rules. It definitely isn't some legalistic religious cult. In fact, it isn't religion at all, it's grace.

You say, Ed that doesn't make sense. This is tough to understand. If grace is God's undeserved mercy, how's it going to teach me about holiness? If grace is the opposite of law and works, how's it going to change my life?

Well, notice something here. The same grace that brings forgiveness of our sins teaches us.

It teaches us to put off, and it teaches us to put on. We're to put off two things. The first is "ungodliness."

Now let me ask you something here, how would you define ungodliness?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary says: "The quality or state of being ungodly."

So then you have to look up "ungodly." The definition there is: "denying or disobeying God : IMPIOUS, IRRELIGIOUS b : contrary to moral law : SINFUL, WICKED

I'd like to give a very simple definition for ungodliness that goes beyond the dictionary definition. "Not having regard for God."

Personally, I think one of the most serious problems among believers in Christ is our shallow view of sin. I believe we all labor with this one.

The Pharisees of Jesus day were outwardly righteous guys. When the people saw them walking down the streets of Jerusalem they thought, "What a fine upstanding member of the community. What a Bible scholar. What holy man. What a fine example of righteousness."

The problem was it was self-righteousness. The Pharisees were sticklers for the law of God but Jesus said they were of their father, the Devil. They outwardly kept a lot of rules but they thought really highly of themselves for it. They had outstanding self-esteem.

If ungodly means “not having a regard for God” then godly means what? “Having a regard for God.”

Listen: A godly life is a life of complete, voluntary dependence on God. That means we trust Him. We trust His wisdom. We trust His love. We trust His goodness. We trust His provision.

Dependence on God excludes all dependence on self.

Something can be refined, moral, appealing, socially acceptable, and yet still ungodly. It can have nothing to do with regarding God.

If what I do is all about me and my accomplishments, it's ungodly. If someone gets up here to do special music, and they do a fantastic job, but they did it to hear you clap instead of to cause people to worship God, it's ungodly.

If I get up here to preach, and I craft an accurate, powerful, sermon full of Bible verses, but I did it so you'd say, “I just love Ed's sermons,” instead of doing it to see God honored and glorified, it's ungodly.

Hold your place here in Titus and turn to I Cor 10:31, pg 1019

Read vs 31

The Grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness. The grace of God teaches us to deny anything that doesn't regard God.

Now if life is about living for the glory of God, and that means down to the most mundane things of life, then grace is teaching us to put off every attitude that doesn't put God right at the center of our life.

Do you leave God here when you walk out to the parking lot after services? Do you leave God here, or is He the hub of your family life, your work, your drive to work, your marriage, your dating relationships, your goals, your dreams.

Godliness says, "I see God's wisdom for life, and it's a natural part of who I am."
Godliness trusts God to do whatever in His infinite wisdom is best, even if it's saying "No" to what I think I want in life. Godliness says with Job in the pain of life, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Back to Titus

Grace teaches us to deny something else too. The goodness of God teaches us to deny worldly lusts.

Today we tend to think of the word "lust" strictly in physical, sexual terms. The word in the original Greek *epithumia*, simply means desires. In Webster's 1828 dictionary lust is defined as simply, "longing desire."

What are the worldly desires grace teaches us to abandon? If grace means "God's undeserved mercy" then worldly desires would include pride, greed, envy, jealousy, covetousness, anger.

That's not a conclusive list but it's more than enough for most of us to start with. When you get those taken care of come back and I'll give you some more.

There's a common denominator to "worldly lust." It's self.

God says, My undeserved mercy that saved you through Jesus Christ, teaches that life isn't all about you. Life is about me."

I. God's Grace Teaches Us To Put Off Ungodliness

II. God's Grace Teaches Us To Put On Righteousness

Read vs 12

Our security in Christ is totally based on grace. For a lot of people this just doesn't compute.

They think that if grace means that God receives us when we don't deserve it that must lead to a weak attitude about sin.

Listen to this quote from the web site, EvangelicalOutreach.org: "Underneath the LIE of OSAS is Satan's Masterful follow up that is leading Millions down the road to hell!

As he said to Eve in the Garden concerning the issue of sin. "You shall surely NOT die!" (Gen3:4) Thus he is saying to the vast majority of professing Christians today, giving them; The Gospel of Security in Sin!"

Look what the Bible is saying here in Titus 2. It's not the wrath of God that teaches those who have trusted Christ as Savior, it's the grace of God. It's not the Law of God or the fear of God, although both are healthy to understand, it's the grace of God.

Knowing that Christ died for me and that my sins are forgiven in Christ doesn't make me say, "Why should I live for God, I'm forgiven anyway." It teaches me to peruse righteousness.

In fact, the standards of grace are infinitely higher than the standards of law.

We've referred to J. F. Strombeck's book "Disciplined by Grace" before. It's an excellent book. In it he writes; *It is possible for the natural man (he means a person who hasn't trusted Christ) to learn to do much that is good; not only because he must, but also because he chooses to do so.*

He can be honest, conscientious, diligent, kind, loving, chaste, courteous, self-sacrificing all because he esteems these as virtues and is esteemed because of them. Man can learn to resist the baser things of life by the sheer power of his natural self.

Obviously the world would be a much better place if people tried to live a moral lifestyle. But, God calls His people to live life on a different level.

Jesus said the two greatest commandments of the OT were: 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'

That's a pretty tall order isn't it? Love God with everything that's in you and love your neighbor with the same passion and intensity as you already love yourself.

I believe we tend to read those verses and say, "That's nice in theory, but it doesn't work for me so I'm not even going to try."

It's a tall order but if you think about it, it's all on a human level. Love God with what's in you (your heart, and soul, and mind.). Love your neighbor with the level of love you have for yourself. That's human love.

What we call the Golden Rule is found in Mat 7:12. It says: *Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them...*

Now compare that with the standard of grace.

Turn to John 15, pg 956 Read vs 12

Try this one: Eph 5, pg 1040 Read vs 1-2

Grace doesn't ask us to do our best. It asks us to be like Christ. Eph 5:25 commands: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...*

What grace teaches us goes way beyond the best that human beings can do. It even goes way beyond the requirements of the Law of Moses.

In the Lord's prayer Jesus taught us to pray: *...forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

Grace commands: *...be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*

See the difference? See why people who say "too much talk about grace leads to loose living" don't have the slightest idea what grace really says.

It's not too much talk about grace that's the problem, it's not enough. It's a misunderstanding of the demands and the power of grace.

When I read through the Book of I Corinthians, in which Paul deals with every sin imaginable; immorality, greed, jealousy, slander, not once does he talk about consequences or fear of losing salvation.

What he zeros in on repeatedly is grace. Here's an example. Chapter 6 he confronts sexual immorality.

Here's how it's dealt with, *"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."*

When we become aware that the lofty standards of grace are on a divine level, it quickly becomes obvious to us that we're going to need God's power to carry them out.

Here's how it works: **Turn to Rom 6 1003**

Read vs 1-2 Sin more so we can get more grace? How offensive! That would totally misunderstand Jesus work on the cross.

Christ died in our place. When we trust Him as Savior we're united with Him spiritually. We've died to our old life and been raised to a new life.

There are three commands in Romans 6 that sum up God's grace empowerment. Grace has standards that are divine. God gives power that's divine.

Read vs 6 "knowing"

Read vs 11 "reckon"

Read vs 13-14 "present"

Follow this: Whenever there is a failure in the life of a believer it's due to dependence on self, instead of God. We are responsible to yield to the control of God. True righteousness is more than being good. It's being godly. It's having a regard for God in everything.

I. God's Grace Teaches Us To Put Off Ungodliness

*II. God's Grace Teaches Us To Put On **True** Righteousness*

III. God's Grace Teaches Us To Live With Expectation

Back to Titus 2 one more time Read vs 13-14

Between the Old Testament & the New the Bible devotes more space to the fact that Jesus Christ is going to return than to any other subject.

In Titus 2 the emphasis isn't so much on the fact of His coming as the fact that every believer should be looking expectantly for Him. Understanding Biblical prophecy has a very specific purpose.

If you truly believe that Jesus Christ could return at any moment, it will impact your life.

Turn to I John 3 Pg 1083

Read 1

John MacArthur writes: “Why does John describe God’s love as ‘what manner of love?’ Perhaps he tried to call it super, colossal, stupendous, magnanimous, or unbelievable, but eventually gave up.”

“Just the concept of God’s love overwhelmed John. He might have understood it better had God called believers ‘slaves,’ ‘neighbors,’ or ‘friends.’

But to be called God’s children was more wonderful than John could imagine.”

This is about grace. God’s amazing grace.

God saved us and made us His children by faith and yet in a lot of ways we’re all still a work in progress.

Read 2

Positionally we’re children of God, and practically, or in every day life, God’s at work through His grace to make us more like Jesus. But one day, when we see Him, the process will be over.

The Biblical term for that next phase is “glorification.” Right now we don’t have glorified bodies. Right now we don’t look any different than any other human being. We don’t glow in the dark or have halos. We’re just us.

But when we meet Jesus, our blessed hope, face to face, we’ll be made like Him. Whatever it means to be like him it will be obvious.

Remember: If you’ve trusted Christ as Savior, you are already a child of God. There’s no step up from being a Child of God.

There’s another state, or condition called glorification, but there’s no higher position in God’s family than than we enjoy by His grace right now.

Read 3

What we are is a Child of God
What we will be is like Christ
What we should be is pure

Knowing that one day you're going to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ ought to motivate you.

Knowing that He's coming back, and it could be at any moment, should draw us into an urgent desire to be pure.

And the question is, when Jesus comes back what would you like Him to find you doing? What kinds of attitudes would you like Him to see?

Our lives ought to be purified by the knowledge of His return. That knowledge ought to produce in us the kind of love and gratitude that causes us to respond in obedience and conformity to His pure standards.

Not because we have to, but because we want to.

"I just can't do it. I can't live the way God wants me to. In fact, I've given up trying. I don't think it's humanly possible to live the way the Bible says I should."

That is absolutely true. It isn't humanly possible. The demands of grace are far too high. But it's divinely possible.

That's why Paul finishes up with a very specific assignment for Titus to carry out. He says Titus.....**verse 15 Read**

"Titus this is what the church in Crete needs to hear."

It's what we need to hear, too. This is God's *Reason For Holiness*.