

The Abundant Grace Of God: Call To Holy Living

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0:00] I'm going to encourage you to, for the sake of the sermon today and your preparedness, we will be starting in Titus 2.

! We will be spending a bulk of our time in Ephesians 4. And there will be a passage read out of Romans 1. So you might want to, if you can, just prep those sections of Scripture with markers, or you can be ready to push the buttons on your phone if you're using your phone or iPad or whatever. But that is what's coming down. Titus 2, Ephesians 4, and Romans 1 will be all alluded to today. And actually, let's go ahead and start by reading Titus 2, verses 11 through 14, which is our section of Scripture that we are expounding on this month.

As I said, it was God's timing in working everything out to be at this point in the letter to Titus and to have it work out so perfectly as to be these several weeks in December covering it during the Christmas season as it is very, very applicable.

Only God can do that perfectly. I try it sometimes and it never usually works out. So Titus 2, verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 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.

[2:14] Every Christmas season, we have the privilege to be reminded about the abundant grace of God through the incarnation, God taking on human flesh and being born in the most humble of circumstances.

We see the abundant grace of God has appeared to us. As we recognize that this baby is the only baby that was born with the purpose of dying, we see the abundant grace of God bring salvation for all people from the manger to the cross and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In a world that's consumed by hopelessness and despair, we truly are a privileged group of people. Many people have never heard about Jesus Christ.

Many people believe that this world is all there is to experience, so they follow their heart to happiness. Isn't that one of the common phrases out there?

Follow your heart. And yet, Scripture tells us in Jeremiah 17, verse 9, that the heart is evil and desperately sick. And who can know it?

[3:35] So that is what people, that's their go-to. That's what they focus on, their happiness. What they think is going to bring them contentment. But as I said, we are a privileged group of people to know Jesus Christ, to know God personally, to have the Scriptures before us, that we can open them up and read them and know what God's expectations are, to know what God has said and spoken, to know that God has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light, according to 1 Peter 2, verse 9.

That He has made us alive together with Christ, that by grace you have been saved, Ephesians 2, 5. And then Romans 6, 4, as we focused on last week with Will and Henry in the waters of baptism, that we were buried with Him, with Christ, by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

And so that whole experience of the water baptism itself does not save or is not in itself a merit-given event.

But it is an outward expression of what actually takes place when you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. You are then identified with Him in His death and burial.

And that is going down into the waters. Then you are brought up and you identify with Him in His resurrection, in His glorified life, beyond the grave.

[5:16] And that is why we walk in newness of life. The old man is dead. The new man is now alive in us. That's not to say that the old man doesn't cling and try to do what it can to invade our lives and things that we still have to deal with day to day because we are and possess a sin nature.

But we have the potential to walk in newness of life and in victory in Christ. Warren Wiersbe has said, it is not enough simply to die to the old life.

There must also be resurrection in the manifestation of the new life. That we put off the grave clothes of the old life and put on the grace clothes of the new life.

This truth is revealed to us in Titus 2 verse 12. Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. This is talking about the grace of God.

This is talking about what is given to us. Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

[6:29] The abundant grace of God is expressed through a call to holy living. That is what we are going to expound on today and focus on.

So please turn to Ephesians 4 now, as I mentioned. This is a great, it's a complimentary passage. Same author, the Apostle Paul.

And so what I love, the fact that Paul wrote so many letters or so much of the New Testament is you really get a view of his heart and his passion as a believer and follower of Christ.

And it goes without saying that a big passion of his is for believers to live consistently holy lives in keeping with their profession of faith in Christ.

So as we look at this in Ephesians 4, we're going to utilize that Titus 2.12 as kind of a mini outline. I mean, it's two points, so it's not really much of an outline.

[7:33] In that first we're going to look at that we're trained to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. Or as Warren Wiersbe says, these are the grave clothes that we possess, that we have.

The ungodliness and worldly passions, we are called to renounce those, to turn away from them.

So Ephesians 4, let's read verse 17 through 22.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.

They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires.

As Paul addresses this issue of renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions and dealing with the old man and the grave clothes or whatever term you want to use, ultimately it should be everything in the past tense as it relates to our life as a believer.

[9:08] It's not what controls us anymore. It's not what we're given to anymore. It's not our passion and our desire anymore. This is everything that should be behind us.

And so you see in verse 17 of Ephesians 4, those who are walking in their own way, those who are walking according to their flesh, they're futile in their thinking.

There's futility of their minds. And that word walk, that includes all the manifestations of life, inward and outward, seen and unseen.

It's not just the outward conduct, but also the inward life of which the outward conduct is the manifestation. So it's not just saying, now as a Christian, oh, I believe in Jesus.

Yeah, I go to church. I think He was a great man. You might even say, yeah, I think He was the Savior and He died for me. But if you're saying all that, what Paul is getting at and what every other commentator who's worth anything will tell you is that it's not enough to just proclaim it, but it must consume you.

[10:19] It must change your life. There must be something different about you. Because when you come to God and you come to Christ, you come as a sinner.

You come as somebody who is dead in their trespasses and sins. You come as somebody who is lost, who is separated from God. And when you make a profession of faith in Jesus, you are then identifying with Him, as I mentioned in Romans 6.

You're identifying with Him in His death so the old man can die and you are identifying in His resurrection. You are raised to newness of life and you're given the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Excuse me. The unregenerate man, the one who is not in Christ, the one who is not saved, plans and resolves everything on the basis of his own thinking.

We'll see you later, Benny. The non-believer does everything based on their own desire, causing him to become his own ultimate authority and following his thoughts to the ultimate outcome of futility and meaninglessness.

[11:33] Apart from Christ, the end is meaninglessness and without hope. In fact, verse 18 says, they are darkened in their understanding.

We live in a time in our country where education and higher learning are heavily pushed on people. And just like in ancient Greece, we pride ourselves on our science, our technology, literature, art, and other achievements of the mind.

And we have done some pretty amazing things because God has given us an amazing mind and brain to use. The Apostle Paul is making a connection that ignorance and sin are inseparable.

So we live in a world that puts so much on human achievement, but yet we fail to realize that in our own achievement, we become our own authority in many ways.

And thus we have this ignorance in our sin. In writing to Timothy, he says that ungodly men are always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

[12:44] Wow. That's quite a statement. Ungodly men are always learning but never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth because they reject it.

How many people do you know that say, or maybe even you yourself, say, well, I don't believe the Bible. It's not true. It's an ancient book. It's religious. It's not applicable.

It doesn't matter. But yet I stand up here and tell you the Bible does matter because it is from our Creator God who has revealed Himself through the pages of Scripture and has not only revealed Himself, but has revealed the truth about you and me and who we are at the core.

Romans 1 verse 21 and 22. Don't turn there. We're not going to Romans 1 yet. Romans 1 verses 21 and 22 says that they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools. People who reject God, people who elevate their own intelligence and reason and logic over the Word of God are people who are claiming to be wise but yet are foolish.

[13:59] The heart of one who continually chooses to sin becomes hardened and insensitive to the things of God. This is being darkened in understanding that Paul refers to.

In verse 19, that leads to callousness in morality. Ephesians 4 verse 19. They've become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

The immoral ways of the ungodly amount to idolatry. Colossians 3 verse 5. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

So Paul in his writing to the church at Colossae. Remember I said this matter of the new life for the believer is a very big deal to Paul. It is very close to his heart.

And if you go back and you read Acts 8 and 9, you'll understand why. Because Paul, who was known as Saul at the time, was a very hardened individual against Jesus, against the truth of the word.

[15:09] And he set out and he killed, he murdered Christians. He murdered people who followed God and the truth of his word. Until he himself had a face-to-face experience with Jesus Christ.

And God got a hold of him. He confessed Christ. And then turned from his ways. So the changed life of the believer is a very important part of a man who himself had a major change in his life.

And so it went right into the church at Colossae. He says all these things, immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed, all these things that are part of our old man and our old self, you need to be dead to that.

Because that all amounts to idolatry in your life. The 5th century BC Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who by the way was not a Christian or a Jew, he was not a believer, he referred to Ephesus, which is where the letter to the Ephesian church went to, he referred to Ephesus as the darkness of vileness.

He says the morals were lower than animals and the inhabitants of Ephesus were fit only to be drowned. Well, that's a high view of the people of this city.

[16:36] Right? No. It shows how depraved and evil the people in this city were. This is 500 years or 400 years before Jesus.

And this church, the city of Ephesus, the immorality was rampant. And the people were only good to be drowned. That's not a good place to be.

I mean, don't believe me, go back and look at Genesis 6 and following. I mean, that tells you about a world of immorality that was drowned in the flood.

So in the rejection of God, people knowingly sin and they also encourage others to do the same.

Now you can turn me to Romans 1.

But keep your finger here in Ephesians 4. We're going to come back to it. So Romans, another one of the letters written by Paul. Romans 1.

[17:41] Normally, I would just say, let's read verses 18 through 32 because that is the greater context and the portion of Scripture that this is. It's all applicable to everything here.

But I'm going to focus on verses 28 through 32 right this morning. So verse 28, Paul writes, and since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, that is these people who are wise in their own eyes, that raise their reason and intelligence above the truth of the Word of God.

Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. So I'm going to pause for a second before we continue because he's about to lay out what the things are done by people who are refusing to acknowledge God and who are turning from Him and raising up their own intellect and thought and reason above the reason and Word of God.

And this is the thing that I want you to get. Verse 28 is telling us not that God gave them a debased mind to do these things, but that they already had the mind to do these things and God just removed Himself from being somebody to intervene and slow them down.

He said, all right, you want to reject me? You want to speak against me? Have at it. Go do what you want to do then.

[19:22] And this is one of those verses that shows you that there are occasions that God will just let people go and do what they are convinced is right.

So, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. Verse 29, they were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

They're full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

This is the mind that is natural to the sinner, that when the sinner rejects the Savior and the conviction that comes through the Word of God, God allows them go for it.

[20:46] And we see that everywhere you turn, you can see that. But I think maybe none so more obvious than the month of June that we refer to as Pride Month.

The debauchery, the sin, the debased mind that has produced such evil in our country and around the world in the name of ultimately hating God and doing what man wants to do according to his flesh and heart.

That is what it looks like for man to follow their heart. Pride Month or killing babies or mutilating children.

And the list can continue on. But it is rampant in our society today. You cannot miss it. So what does Paul say in Ephesians 4, going back to Ephesians 4, verses 20 and 21?

Well, in two words, he says, stop it. He's telling the believer, you know, put off the old self.

[22:08] Look at that, verse 20 and 21. Now that's not the way that you learned Christ. You've not learned Christ in impurity and immorality to be callous to what is right.

Assuming that you've heard about him and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self. He says, stop it. Put it off.

Put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires. I believe wholeheartedly in Ephesus and in other churches that Paul was instrumental in starting through the preaching of the gospel that you had people that we would put in the category of pride, LGBTQ people.

That there are people who are saved out of that lifestyle. And Paul's saying, that's your former manner of life. You have, as a believer, a new responsibility. So they're to hear with their ears the truth and teaching of Scripture.

They're to have the knowledge of God. Verse 21, assuming you have heard about him and were taught him as the truth is in Jesus.

[23 : 34] To hear him is not merely to perceive with the outward ear but to receive with understanding in the heart. Knowledge of God is inconsistent with a life of sin because knowledge implies love and God is a holy God and to know him therefore is to love holiness.

To know God truly and to live for God is to live in holiness or seek to live in holiness. And truth and holiness are united as light and heat are in the same ray.

There cannot be one without the other. You have truth and you have holiness. You must if you know what the truth of the word of God is and you seek to love God you're going to love God what Jesus says in John 13 verses 35 and 36 if you love me you will keep my commandments.

That's what Jesus says if we love God we're going to keep his commandments and so if we're going to keep his commandments we need to know what the truth of the word of God is. We need to know what it is we must be keeping. John MacArthur said because man's sinfulness flows out of his reprobate mind the transformation must begin with the mind.

Christianity is cognitive before it is experiential. And that moves us on to the second point to live self-controlled upright and godly lives to put on the grace clothes of God.

[25 : 03] So verse 23 in Ephesians 4 tells you to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

We're told to renew your mind being renewed points to progressive sanctification. It shows that something must be something old must pass away and be gone and done with and that you need to have a new thought process.

Romans 12 verses 1 and 2 refer to this as well. That you are not conformed to this world but you're transformed through the renewal of your mind. How do you renew your mind?

Well this is how you renew your mind. You recognize that everything you do in and of yourself innately from time you were born to the time you come to Christ has always been done based on your heart.

based on following your heart and doing what you think is right or doing what makes you feel good or whatever is going to quote unquote bring you happiness. Right? All these sayings are out there.

[26 : 09] Do what is good for you and don't worry about anyone else and how it affects them. And so you come to Christ and you recognize that you're a sinner and you need to be saved and you come to the cross and you call on him for salvation.

You now are you then are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and you were born again and now you're given new desires. Now it's not all it's not a package deal it's not all at once it's not like okay I'm going to come in and take this all out and here you go something new and you're a completely new person you don't have any more struggles no more problems or sin is not an issue for you anymore no no God starts working on you.

Right? And as you are exposed to scripture the renewing of your mind as you are reading the Bible as you are praying as you are seeking to live it out and to live in obedience to him it slowly transforms you and you know there's still there's still going to be some baggage there's still some skeletons in the closet right?

That are still there that are not pleasing to God and he works on you and he convicts you hey you two none of us yelling at each other but he convicts you as you're exposed to the truth of scripture and so the renewal of your word you don't have to be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind you're learning what God expects you're learning God's truth bits and pieces at a time as you go through life so that you may prove what the will of God is so you may prove what God's pleasure and desire is for you that which is good and acceptable and perfect Colossians 3 9 and 10 says do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices and have put on the new self who is being renewed or renovated to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him 2 Corinthians 4 verse 16 therefore we do not lose heart but though our outer man is decaying yet our inner man is being renewed day by day your body is growing old you're breaking down you're getting sicker you can do less with it but the inner man the spiritual man part of you is being renewed day by day as you seek Christ and know him in his word and live for him and then in verse 24

Ephesians 4 verse 24 says to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness so as these things are happening as you are as you are putting off and putting in death the old man and you're being renewed in your mind and you're seeking to live with

the grace clothes on to the glory of God as the new man in Christ you become holy in your morality a changed nature demands a changed behavior Galatians 2 20 says I have been crucified with Christ you know this verse many of you I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me that is the life of a believer you at you know at one point in 1999

[29 : 49] Ken Baratta died the old man dead and Christ started living in me and as a new believer and so this is it's fascinating it's just like God's connecting points in my mind as I'm standing here we are celebrating Christmas the birth of a baby Jesus right and as as as somebody who comes to Christ and puts their faith in Christ you're born again right that's the terminology we use you're born again you're like a baby and so in many ways as you have the Holy Spirit in you you know it's it's infant stage right in that you know as a new Christian you're an infant stage and you've got to grow up you know and so you have to long for the pure milk of the word and seek it to know it and to grow by it and as you grow you go from the little baby to a little bit of a bigger baby to then a toddler and you know the child and all that stuff you know go through all those stages spiritually speaking it takes time and so that's just fascinating to me we're talking about baby Jesus at Christmas time and maybe it's you in Christ you are baby insert name maybe you don't know

Jesus Christ as your Savior maybe you've never called on him maybe you have rejected Christ where you're at and in your life and he is he was born into a world of darkness but he is the light of the world and he holds his arms open beckoning you to come to him and call on him for salvation to to recognize your need of his grace in your life his abundant grace in your life and you too can be born again and become the baby Christian and start your growing process now and Galatians 2 20 would be true for you that it's no longer you who live but Christ lives in you and the life you live in the flesh now you live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself up for you our old self has been crucified with Christ it's dead and we now live in the power of Christ to a new life Romans 6 verse 13 do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God so the bottom line in Romans 6 is this you choose for the first time in your life when you come to Christ and you are saved and he dwells in you you have something you've never had before in your life you can then choose whom is your master or who you are going to obey before Christ you could only obey sin in your flesh after Christ now you've got that struggle right you can go to Romans 7 verse 25 and following that Paul outlines that you know that struggle that fight day after day and we're called to walk in holiness you know the abundant grace of God given to us through the incarnation salvation offered to all men and for those who are who have come to Christ and confessed faith in him a call to holy living when a person is genuinely saved there is a transformation not only of nature but of living it's not possible to be saved from the penalty of sin and not be saved from its power and dominion and if you're a Christian here and you're struggling with a sin particular to you you could have victory it's there God has saved us to be victorious in our life as we seek to live holy lives we must be hearers of the word of God and seek out the things pertaining to righteousness in this book but we also must put feet to the words and flesh it out in our lives it's not about just what you know it's also about what you more so what you do let's pray Father God I thank you for your word and this time we had to explore it in Ephesians and Romans and Titus and Lord I just pray that as we go about our day as we take from this sermon Lord a recognition that you have called us to holy living for your glory through your grace

Lord I pray for anyone here who doesn't know you who's never confessed Jesus Christ who's never called on you for salvation Lord I pray that this day I would love to see them make that decision but Lord I just pray this day they would think about that and consider the importance of the matter at hand their eternal destiny Lord their eternal state where they stand with you but the day is going to come where we're going to stand before you in judgment Lord and without the grace of Christ without his righteousness being applied to our account we are going to have to pay the debt of which we have no means of paying no way of paying in and of ourselves I love you Lord and thank you for this time pray that we would continue to think on these things throughout this day Amen Thank you.