

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

Titus 3:1-8

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

- To understand the lost is the beginning of love for the lost
- To accept the lost is not accepting what made them lost, but it is the beginning of reaching the lost
- To empathize with the lost is not accepting the sins they have committed, but the beginning of saving their souls from those sins
- To have the self-righteous spirit of “I am so much better than the lost because I am a member of a non-institutional church of Christ” is the beginning of you becoming the lost.

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

- Self-awareness and self-honesty are among the best protections we possess
- Israel knew they were without hope by themselves
 - Ez. 37:11 - “Then He said to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!”
- Jesus’ audience in Samaria believed for themselves
 - John 4:42 - “Then they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

- We know that this world is not our home
 - Rom. 8:23 - “We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body”
- And when we are being completely self-aware and honest with ourselves, we will remember who we once were and that we could become that way again
 - Titus 3:3 - “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.”

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

- “Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes. Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”
(Carl Jung)
- “Whenever you are about to find fault with someone, ask yourself the following question: What fault of mine most nearly resembles the one I am about to criticize?” (Marcus Aurelius)

Who We Have Become

- God's grace makes us different
 - Titus 3:4-7 - “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Who We Have Become

- Deut. 15:12-15 - “If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. 13 And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; 14 you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD has blessed you with, you shall give to him. 15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today.”

Who We Have Become

- He saved us. Why?
 - Because I am a good person? Because He saw the potential in me to do great things for Him?
 - Because I am unique and special? Because I have the capacity to be more moral than other people in the world?
- Because of His kindness and love

Who We Have Become

- He saved us. How?
 - Because I did a lot of good works? Because I was a good person before I was saved? Because I did all of the plan of salvation correctly?
- By His mercy and grace. Not merit, but mercy; not goodness, but grace

Who We Have Become

- He saved us. By what?
 - Because I put sin out of my life? Because I became a member of the right church in the right way?
- By washing and regeneration through Jesus Christ
 - 1Peter 1:18-19 - “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Who We Have Become

- What is our part in all of this?
 - Yes, we must believe and obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the manner defined in scripture
 - We must put sin from our lives
 - We must do good works at every opportunity
- Titus 3:8, 14 - “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men... 14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.”

Who We Have Become

- Abstaining from sin and doing good works define us as a redeemed people
 - Titus 2:14 - “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works”
- But this is not the sum of what God asks of us in return for His saving grace and mercy

What We Must Do Now

- Christians must show every consideration to all men
 - Titus 3:1-2 - “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men”

What We Must Do Now

- How does the inspired apostle define our relationship with the lost?
 - Be model, law-abiding citizens
 - Be socially aware and active in the community
 - Be kind and considerate in speech and conversation
 - Be peaceful and gentle in your treatment of others
 - Be self-effacing and unselfish

What We Must Do Now

- These things are the fruit of the Spirit
 - Gal. 5:22-23 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”
- These things demonstrate that we have been changed by God’s grace

What We Must Do Now

- We were foolish, without spiritual understanding
 - Eph. 2:11-13 - “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh ... 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

What We Must Do Now

- We were disobedient, living for what furthered our interests
 - Eph. 2:1-3 - “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

What We Must Do Now

- We were deceived, not understanding the truth, led by the Adversary
 - Eph. 5:6-8 - “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light”
 - 1Cor. 6:11 - And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

What We Must Do Now

- We were enslaved to various lusts and pleasures.
 - Rom. 6:17-19 - “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.”

What We Must Do Now

- We spent our lives in malice, ill will towards others from self-centeredness and wanting our own way, even if it means harm to others
 - Col. 3:8-10 - “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him”

What We Must Do Now

- We spent our lives in envy, wanting what others have. Envy is a brother to greed
 - Gal. 5:19-21 - “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

What We Must Do Now

- We were full of hate for others
 - 1John 3:10, 14-15 - “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother... 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. 15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

- Perhaps you are thinking, “I was never that bad. I was a basically good person, even before I became a Christian.”
- Were you a sinner?
- Where do the scriptures speak of degrees of lost?
 - It is the same as being the best horse in the glue factory, the best bag of trash in the landfill, or the cleanest hog in the pigpen

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

- Paul is inspired by God to say that in order for us to act with love and good deeds towards unbelievers who mistreat and malign us, we need to remember that we used to be just like them. We would still be acting like that, except for one glorious truth: “There but for the grace of God go I.” (John Bradford, 1552)

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

- 1Cor. 15:9-10 - “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”