

“We Ourselves Were Also Once...”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction:

- A. “If we are unwilling to learn from our own personal past, we will go nowhere in the present; and inexorably, we will go back to our past in the future.” (Paul R. Blake, February 11, 2018)
- B. To understand the lost is the beginning of love for the lost
 - 1. To accept the lost is not accepting what made them lost, but it is the beginning of reaching the lost
 - 2. To empathize with the lost is not accepting the sins they have committed, but the beginning of saving their souls from those sins.
 - 3. 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 becoming numbered among the lost.
- C. Self-awareness and self-honesty are among the best protections we possess
 - 1. Israel knew they were without hope by themselves - Ez. 37:11
 - 2. Jesus’ audience in Samaria believed for themselves - John 4:42
 - 3. We know that this world is not our home - Rom. 8:23
 - 4. 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
 - 5. “Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes. Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.” (Carl Jung)
 - 6. “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)

I. WHO WE HAVE BECOME

- A. God’s grace makes us different people than we were - Titus 3:4-7
 - 1. John Newton was an alcoholic sailor and a vile slave-trader, but by God’s grace he became a great preacher and hymn writer, including the hymn Amazing Grace. He wrote a text in bold letters and put it over the mantel in his study where he would see it often. It was Deuteronomy 15:15 - “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.” Newton didn’t want to forget that he had received mercy. (Frank Boreham Treasury, compiled by Peter Gunther [Moody Press], p. 72). Deut. 15:12-15
 - 2. Titus 3:1-7 is Paul’s “Remember When” text
- B. He saved us. Why?
 - 1. 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?
 - 2. Because of His kindness and love

- C. He saved us. How?
 - 1. 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?
 - 2. By His mercy and grace. Not merit, but mercy; not goodness, but grace
- D. He saved us. By what?
 - 1. Because I put sin out of my life? Because I became a member of the right church in the right way?
 - 2. By washing and regeneration through Jesus Christ - 1Peter 1:18-19
- E. What is our part in all of this?
 - 1. 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
 - 2. Abstaining from sin and doing good works define us as a redeemed people - Titus 2:14
 - 3. But this is not the sum of what God asks of us in return for His saving grace and mercy

II. WHAT WE MUST DO NOW

- A. Christians must show every consideration to all men - Titus 3:1-2
 - 1. How does the inspired apostle define our relationship with the lost?
 - a. Be model, law-abiding citizens
 - b. Be socially aware and active in the community
 - c. Be kind and considerate in speech and conversation
 - d. Be peaceful and gentle in your treatment of others
 - e. Be self-effacing and unselfish
 - 2. These things are the fruit of the Spirit - Gal. 5:22-23
 - 3. These things demonstrate that we have been changed by God's grace
- B. Christians must remember that they were once just like the people of the world bound by sin but saved by God, just as Moses told Israel they were once slaves in Egypt and redeemed by God
 - 1. We were foolish, without spiritual understanding - Eph. 2:11-13
 - 2. We were disobedient, living for what furthered our interests - Eph. 2:1-3
 - 3. We were deceived, not understanding the truth, led by the Adversary - Eph. 5:6-8; 1Cor. 6:11
 - 4. We were enslaved to various lusts and pleasures. Sin, like addictive drugs, often enslaves the one who dabbles with it. At first, it seems as if it is pleasurable and will meet your needs - Rom. 6:17-19
 - 5. 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
 - a. Col. 3:8-10
 - 6. We spent our lives in envy wanting what others have. Envy is a brother to greed - Gal. 5:19-21
 - 7. We were full of hate for others - 1John 3:10, 14-15

Conclusion:

- A. Perhaps you are thinking, "I was never that bad. I was a basically good person, even before I became a Christian."
 - 1. Were you a sinner? Where do the scriptures speak of degrees of lost?
 - 2. 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
- B. 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) - 1Cor. 15:9-10