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WHEN THE ANSWER YOU SEEK IS THE VERY THING YOU MOCK (Part 2) (Titus 3:3-7)

Last week we considered the following passage:

Titus 3:3-7 – 3. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5. he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6. whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7. so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The list at the beginning of the text describes the person or society who mocks God. His ways are a joke to the one who scoffs at obedience and submission to anyone other than themselves, especially to God. It's a pretty apt description of our current culture where sin reigns.

Then a key word appears – “but”. With everything that is wrong with a godless approach to life, God makes it possible to say no to rebellion to Him. In these verses, Paul writes the answer to the problem of sin.

THE GOSPEL

Look at the key words describing God in verse 4, contrasting him with the vileness of verse 3. He is kind, loving and good. And he saves people from sin. How? Not by the person doing right things, but only through his merciful plan – the death and resurrection of Jesus which leads to renewal by the Holy Spirit. That's how to be justified – a legal term meaning it's as if the believer never sinned and is completely forgiven, an heir of eternal life.

So as we look around at the injustice, oppression, abuse, and thousands of other sinful behaviors and attitudes that mark our nation, we also see people

constantly asking what can be done about it? If the problem is a sin issue (and it is), then the answer can never be legislation, protests, or social justice. The only lasting change for sick hearts is a change of heart and that can only happen through the gospel changing people from the inside out.

The biblical answer is clear, but it's not what our world wants to hear. They try to come up with their own solution, mocking the answer God has provided all along. To get at the right conclusion, though, the right things have to be acknowledged.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE TEMPTATION

Whatever the sin is, it starts as a temptation. Unbelievers and believers alike experience this. It's common to all people but it isn't sin - yet. Even Jesus went through temptation.

*Hebrews 4:15 - For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who **in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.***

So Christ, being fully human, went through temptation. It's common to all of us and we have to acknowledge that fact or we will be caught off guard every time.

*1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you that is not **common to man**. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Christ was tempted without giving in to sin. We can't say that. So what hope do we have? For the believer, God gives this great promise when we go through temptation. For the heart that doesn't desire God, there is no promise to help in that time of need. That person may be able to make a right decision based on their God-given conscience, but ongoing help and power

from the Holy Spirit to reject sin is not available to the one who rejects God.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRUGGLE

As we said, all people will be tempted. But not all have the same ability to withstand temptation, since God provides a way of escape only for believers. But that doesn't mean there still isn't a struggle.

*1 Peter 2:11 - Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the **passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.***

Followers of God still fight the battle between the flesh and the spirit. To win that war, we first must acknowledge it exists, then fight it God's way.

But we have to understand this: the sin we battle is ultimately sin against God. Not against family, or our company, or whoever we might seek to have power over. Sin is against God.

David, after he sinned with Bathsheba, acknowledged this.

*Psalms 51:4 - **Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.***

Joseph knew this when his employer's wife tried to seduce him. Speaking of his boss he said:

*Genesis 39:9 - "He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. **How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"***

All people are at war with sin, but do not all possess the same weapons to fight with. If you have believed in Christ and are being changed by the gospel of Christ, you have power in you (through God's Spirit) to win the battle.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE ANSWER

If the answer is the power to say no to sin based on a reconciled relationship with God (the gospel), then turning to him in times of temptation is an acknowledgement of that answer.

*Hebrews 4:16 - Let us then **with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

So what did Joseph do when Potiphar's wife cornered him with her adulterous proposition?

*Genesis 39:12 - she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and **fled and got out of the house.***

When temptation is knocking, a great response is running in the other direction (physically if necessary). Just get removed from the situation – maybe a situation we carelessly didn't avoid in the first place.

Sexual abuse is only part of our troubles, but one we're hearing much about right now. Larry Nassar was sentenced recently to 175 years in prison for abusing dozens of young female athletes, molesting them under the guise of "medical treatment." One of his accusers absolutely nailed the truth of Titus 3:3-7 when she said

You spoke of praying for forgiveness. But Larry, if you have read the Bible you carry, you know forgiveness does not come from doing good things, as if good deeds can erase what you have done. It comes from repentance which requires facing and acknowledging the truth about what you have done in all of its utter depravity and horror without mitigation, without excuse, without acting as if good deeds can erase what you have seen in this courtroom today.

- Rachael Denhollander -

Drawing near to God and removing ourselves from temptation – on the ground of God's forgiveness and empowerment to say no to sin. That's the answer to our cultural rot and is exactly what our culture mocks.

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 153, House Office Building