



Why We Need God's Mercy



A New Beginning (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

Yesterday we looked at the passage in Titus chapter 3 where Paul so clearly and fully unfolds this theme: first, the reason why we all need God's mercy; second, how God has made full provision for our need through Jesus.

Since this passage is going to be the basis of all my talks throughout this week, I'm going to go back to it and read it through once more at the beginning of this talk. Titus 3 verses 3 through 7:

"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved

us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

In my talk yesterday, I pointed out eight successive facts that emerge from those words of Paul.

Today I'm going to focus on the first verse of this passage—verse 3—the first fact where Paul paints a brief but very vivid picture of our need of God's mercy.

Let's look at that verse again. Titus 3 verse 3:

"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another."

Now notice a number of different aspects of what Paul says there. First of all, notice that Paul begins the statement by saying, "we too were." So that pronoun "we" includes Paul. He doesn't exclude himself. He doesn't say, "I was different, I was a Jew, I was a Pharisee, I was righteous, I didn't have

these problems." It includes Paul, and remember, it also includes you and me. It includes the whole human race. We too—none of us are excluded. And then the verse, the first thing that Paul says is, "we too were foolish." Foolish even though, perhaps, highly educated, intellectual, sophisticated.

Do you realize that it's possible to be an educated fool? How do I know? Well, for many years I was one myself—highly educated, studying various different languages, holding a professorship in philosophy, but oh so foolish. And really, I believe every single word in that verse that Paul uses applied accurately to me.

I remember the first time I was confronted by a preacher. And believe me, I stayed away from preachers! But this came about through circumstances I hadn't planned. And he looked at me and he said, "Do you believe that you're a sinner?" Well my specialty in philosophy had been definitions, and so my mind quickly went through all the legitimate or possible definitions of "a sinner." And as my mind went through them, I realized that every one of them applied exactly to me. And yet I was highly educated, intellectual, sophisticated.

I'd like to suggest to you a thought that most of the trouble in the world today is being caused by educated fools. You see, it's the educated fools that basically have the means at their disposal to cause the trouble. Education is not a solution for foolishness. That at least is the education in the accepted sense.

Here's what the psalmist says in Psalm 14 verse 1:

"The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good."

Notice that it's a clear mark of foolishness to deny in our heart that there's a God. Sometimes the denial is only in our heart. We don't come out and say it openly with our mouth, but our heart is acting on the assumption that there is no God. And the result the psalmist reveals is corruption in deed and life. He says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile." That's the result of denying the reality of God. It leads to a corrupt and vile life.

Going back to Paul's list, the second word: disobedient—rebels at heart, and that was oh, so true of me. I didn't really want anybody taking authority over my life. I felt I was clever enough and educated enough and intelligent enough to take care of my own life. Who was anybody else to tell me what to do?

And then Paul goes on after disobedient—deceived. Why deceived? The basic reason why we are deceived is because we reject God's truth. And if we reject God's truth, the only alternative is deception. Here's what Paul says about the downward pathway of the human race, once it turns away from the knowledge of God. In Romans 1:28 and 29:

"Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice."

The list doesn't end there, but that's long enough. Notice, because man refused to retain and make room in his mind for the knowledge of God, God punished him by giving him over to a depraved mind which results in a depraved life.

There's another related passage too in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 11 and 12 where Paul says this:

"For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."

Notice that people who reject the truth because they want to live in wickedness come under powerful delusion. Education is no protection against that kind of delusion.

And then Paul goes on in his list, after "deceived" he says "enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures." Slaves of desires that are harmful, that are contrary to the law of God and contrary to the principles on which the universe is based. Take one simple example, the habit of smoking. How many, many millions of people are enslaved by that habit, and yet we all know today that it's terribly dangerous, that it's a potential cause of cancer. And yet people who know that cannot give it up because they're enslaved.

Going on with Paul's list there in Titus chapter 3 verse 3 he says, "We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." "Malice" and "envy"—we couldn't think nicely about people. There were people that got on our nerves, people that frustrated us, people that we just didn't want to see, that we wouldn't want to sit next to, or live as neighbors to. And then he said, "hated and hating one another." So much hatred in the world today, isn't that true? Not just in the world at large, but in the human heart, in your heart, in the heart of so many—hated in families, hated in

neighborhoods, hatred in communities, and you need to bear in mind that Paul was a very, very religious man. I've pointed out already that education is no solution to these problems. Let me add also that religion is no solution to these problems. You can be very religious, and very malicious—full of envy. That's a terrible thing but it's true.

A certain speaker, political speaker, said, "Liberty, what crimes have been committed in thy name?" I sometimes think we could substitute for "Liberty," "religion." "Religion, what crimes have been committed in thy name?" Men have been burned, crucified, pulled apart limb from limb on the basis of what? Religion. Religion doesn't solve the problem of malice, and envy and hatred. It just provides it with a superficial cloak.

You see, we see this in the macrocosm of international relationships. Everything that Paul has said there is demonstrated in the news media in the headlines in every way that news comes to us. But bear in mind the macrocosm in turn just reflects the microcosm. It reflects the individual human heart. It reflects the condition of marriages, of families, the relationships between parents and children.

Paul has correctly diagnosed our problem. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he's given a list of things which are manifestly true today. Anybody with an honest heart has to acknowledge their truth. But thank God! There is a remedy. There is a way out. God has provided a solution.

And in my remaining talks through this week, I'm going to be dealing systematically with that solution.

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