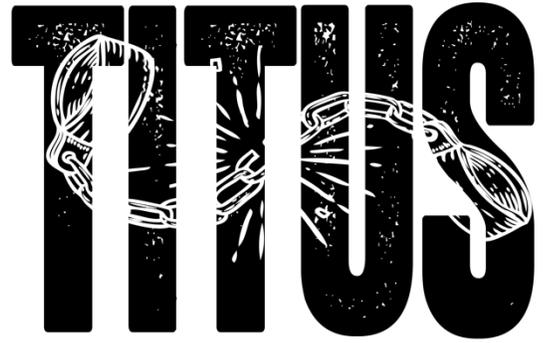


March 15, 2020 | DAVID ANDERSON

The Problem With “Us Versus Them”
Titus 3:3



Something happens to us in the Christian culture when we start developing an “us versus them” mentality. There is self-righteousness that grows in us when we start delineating people into spiritual “haves” and spiritual “have nots.”

- We have salvation and they don't.
- We know how to live right and they don't.
- We have power from God and they don't.
- We know how to raise our kids and they don't.
- We know how to be wise with money and they don't.
- We know what's best and they don't. It's “us versus them”.

The only thing, and I mean the only thing, that makes us different than anyone else in this world is the miraculous grace and love of Jesus Christ. If it wasn't for Jesus, our lives would be an absolute mess filled with addiction, self-imposed pain and tragic episode after tragic episode. The only difference between us and them is Jesus' uncompromising commitment to us that nailed Him to the cross.

Paul begins chapter 3 of Titus by saying, “¹Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.” Grace begets grace. Grace makes us gracious. The Prince of Peace can make us peaceful. The gentle and humble Savior can make us gentle and humble in some of the most difficult life circumstances.

Paul knew that self-righteousness had crept into the Cretan church and they weren't convinced of the grace they were being asked to extend to non-Christians. Paul knew they may have developed an “us versus them” mentality. They may have begun distancing themselves from non-Christians on that island. What does Paul do? He reminds them of who they once were; not too long ago, your lives looked exactly like theirs.

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. (Titus 3:3)

For we ourselves were also once foolish (1 Tim. 6:9; Eph. 4:18). The word *anoetos* means “unintelligent, foolish, without understanding.” It's describing spiritual blindness that we all had before Christ; we could not fathom the spiritual things of God (1 Cor. 2:14). The truth is, we weren't seeking God. We have always been running away from God, ever since Adam ran away from God in the Garden of Eden and hid himself in his garments of fig leaves. We were absolute fools.

Our foolishness has an ugly offspring—disobedience. *Apeithes* is a part of a word group in Greek that is basically concerned with our personal relationship towards a person and our unwillingness to trust that person. The problem is one of disobedience to both God (Acts 26:19; Rom 11:30) and human authority (Romans 13; Eph 6:1). We fail to view authority as a gift and instead view it as a threat. It is a threat to our

autonomy, not a gift of love for protection. Before Jesus, all our little hearts needed to hear is that we weren't allowed to go in there or we can't do this or we shouldn't touch that. You can eat of every fruit of the garden but there is one fruit that you can't eat of. Suddenly, everything in us wanted to wrap our big mouths around that fruit.

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived. "Misled/deceived" is a present passive participle from planao, "to lead astray, cause to wander." When men reject the knowledge of God, God turns them over to their own foolish imaginations, with the result they are not only deceived, but that they both deceive themselves and others (Charles Swindoll, see Rom. 1:18f; Eph. 4:17f; 2 Tim. 3:13).

This deception leads to enslavement to various sinful lusts and pleasures (Rom. 6:6, 16; 2 Pet 2:19). Sin does that. It makes people prisoners. Before Jesus we weren't free, we were prisoners. Paul in Romans 6 says to the Christian: The question isn't - will you have a master? You will have a master; which master will you serve?

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy. Malice can also be translated evil, *kakia*. Envy is that vicious and destructive heart in us that cannot bear to see someone else prosper or succeed (Rom. 1:29; Gal 5:21; 1 Tim. 6:4). Without Jesus we are jealous, always assessing and evaluating and comparing and competing. Everyone's life is better; everyone's circumstances are better.

- How great would it be to have that job?
- How great would it be to be married to that person?
- How great would it be to live there?
- How great would it be to go on that vacation?
- How great would it be to have that family?

Envy and jealousy are a black hole that can't be reasoned with and it leads to this final description—hateful and hating one another. Why are we shocked at all the relational pain in this world? This is where life without Jesus goes—jealousy, envy, hateful and hating one another. Life without Jesus is hateful, angry, seething, blood thirsty for justice and retribution.

THIS WEEK:

- 1) Invite someone into your life that can call you on your inner Pharisee. Invite someone to pray over you and your self-righteousness. It's not "us versus them". Why do we need help with this? Because we don't see our inner Pharisee in ourselves and we usually surround ourselves with people who agree with us. We make statements and judgments that we have no business making about people. We have no humility. We sarcastically judge motives and throw around statements that are careless and judgmental. We make ourselves to be experts over situations we have no clue about. Remember Titus 3:2, "Speak evil of no one, be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men."
- 2) Don't rule anyone out. Don't stop talking to the people in your life that are opposed to the Gospel or opposed to Christ's views on life. I'm constantly shocked at how those I think are so far from Christ come to Christ. I'm also shocked at how those I think are so close to Christ turn out to be so far from Christ. I can't predict it and guess what? No one could have predicted it with us, either, and I believe that's Paul's point in Titus 3:3. Grace doesn't choose the most presentable humans. Grace isn't drawn to important people or shiny people or educated people or smart people. Grace is drawn to one thing and only one thing and that is sinful brokenness (Luke 5:31-32, etc.). Grace goes after the most despicable character in society and it means He is going to continue to bring really messy people into our community. As we invite people for our Easter celebration, don't say "no" to grace for them. Please trust that God's grace may even be pursuing them!