

The Second Sunday in Lent
February 25, 2024
Accusation vs. Intercession
Romans 5: 1-11

Imagine with me for just a moment. Suspend your disbelief in the unimaginable and walk with me to a world you never realized you spiritually live in every day.

You are standing in the courtroom and Satan is your accuser, always has been always will be, and the evidence is overwhelming:

We don't study His precious words for salvation daily searching the scriptures to see if we can find Christ in them.

We hardly devote ourselves to our King Jesus at all except in so far as it meets our needs.

We rejoice little in God's triumphs and rage at our minor injustices.

When it comes right down to it, if it's all about our faith, we have little to boast about.

What we think, what we know, what we did in contradistinction to the Word God - however we see it - matters little to God!

One of my favorite professors, Ronald Feuerhahn, once told us at Seminary, "It doesn't matter what you feel, it matters what you believe!"

And, boy oh boy, I know my feelings, I know my past, I am all too keenly aware of my failures.

And I really know just how unfaithful I have been to God!

Thank God it is not *OUR* faith that saves!

As Luther taught so eloquently on the passivity of our faith... We don't have it, or earn it, rather God declares us righteous by Faith. But our faith cannot save in and of itself. It's not our faithfulness, it's not the quality of our faith, and it's not having confidence and faith in ourselves. Rather it is Christ, *in whom we have* Faith, that must save!

Now, that is something we can boast about.

Not our ethical and moral lifestyle...

Let's just agree that we all left our morals and ethics at the door every single time it was convenient for us. I mean, honestly, who didn't take some post-it notes from work? Who

didn't take the coins they found in the vending machine they didn't put there? Who didn't tell that white lie when it got everyone on our side?

But even if you walked that ethical line carefully enough to justify your own sense of ethics...1 John 1:8 gently reminds us: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

But it's even more than that.

Sometimes we even have the arrogance of a church worker or volunteer that elevates ourselves where God has not. A false sense of security that thinks, "God needs me, or surely the church will cave in without my help...". Well to some degree that may be somewhat true, and for sure we sinful pastors think that all the time!

"What will they ever do without me? They will never find anyone that can replace what I can do. Boy, they are gonna miss me when I'm gone."

Ahh, no, they won't! Because God will replace us, and the church will move on.

The only thing that will truly suffer my absence is...the sandcastle of sin-centered activities that will quickly fall, without my constant maintenance that it requires...

And rest assured, the proclamation of the Gospel won't suffer at all.

Grant it, the lie of sin gets half way around the world before the truth of Jesus will get out the door. But the truth of Jesus is an unending source of energy that never fails to accomplish what God set it forth to do.

Sin flies high, but flames out feebly, in the short term...by evidence of what it is, and the lack of substance that it bears. So when we boast, it is not in our sinful selves, rather it is in the overflowing Grace of GOD!

AND IN THAT WE CAN TRULY STAND!

A firm confession, proclamation, and statement of our faith in Christ as our intercessor is everything.

Now, that doesn't mean it will be without difficulty. Life is indeed hard. But amid the difficulties of this life Jesus does something amazing and life sustaining.

George Hunsinger put it best, saying, "Christ is present...in our sufferings, and having made our sufferings His own, we know that they are not meaningless."

What an incredible picture of God's Grace! Even the suffering is a means of His productive love for us.

Some say suffering is like a muscle. It sometimes literally rips our lives apart, yet it gives God yet another chance to strengthen our faith and reveal the gifts of faith that would not have otherwise come to light.

Martin Luther says of these gifts, "He who has faith has all things, but they are hidden; yet through suffering they are exercised until they excel."

Lent is our gymnasium of Faith. Improving our muscle memory of prayer, winning with worship, keeping up our determined spiritual drive with personal devotion and prayer as a response to our present sufferings.

So, I say to you...are you suffering?

REJOICE IN IT!

I know, seems the opposite of what we would normally rejoice in! And I get that, but under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul encourages us in this way, not because suffering is pleasant, but because it is *useful*.

Oh, the world would despair you by saying: "But the Devil has you pegged."

And they may suggest that the Devil is in the details, and that you must give the Devil His due, ...RIGHT?

NEVER! Because, even though there is no end in this life to the struggle of your sinful life, the Son of God is with you. He was lifted for you upon that Cross to suffer and die in place of you. And the Cross that tore His Body apart is the very Cross that mends the world torn apart by our sin!

And when you can't even rise from the dead of sleep to get to church, Jesus rises from the dead to raise you from your spiritual death, every single day. And that makes us free from every accusation the Devil may levy against us.

Do you have a shameful and embarrassing past? Welcome to the Club.

Do you struggle with sin daily that never leaves you at peace? Ok, apostle of Paul, you struggle likewise in Scripture.

Are you sick and tired of the Devil and all His ways as He deviously manipulates you into division, dereliction of duty, and dumb choices?

Shout at him with the confidence that can only come from Christ, "Whatever accuser! Jesus is my intercessor!!!"

Now, may that peace which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

AMEN.

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