

Our Saviour, Jesus!

The fall into sin has left us ruined in spiritual things and corrupt from head to toe, even in those things God has left subject to our reason. As a result, our condition by nature is hopeless and absolutely desperate. We have by nature, from the moment of conception and in every moment since then, deserved His wrath and eternal punishment. We are absolutely helpless and can do nothing to prevent our doom. There is not even the will to prevent it, much less the ability.

What then is to become of fallen humanity? God is just. A price must be paid for the sin of the world. It must be a full price. Sin must be punished, punished as it deserves to be punished, as an offense and a rebellion against the holy, just, and all-powerful God. God cannot suffer injury to His justice and still be God. God, however, also is gracious, loving, and merciful. Those are His attributes as much as justice is. In His grace, love, and mercy He longs for our rescue. But how can His justice be satisfied if He shows mercy and rescues us? And how can grace and love and mercy be satisfied if He treats us as we deserve and as justice therefore demands?

All man-made religions look to man for a solution to the problem. The offered solutions however are nothing but vain self-delusion that only makes the problem worse by keeping people away from the only real solution. Man-made and man-centred solutions offer the false hope that sinful human beings can perform for God some extraordinary work that will satisfy His justice and cancel out sin. Or, they imagine that if we just do the best we can (ignoring the all too obvious fact that there isn't anyone who always or probably ever does the best he can!), God should be satisfied with us and reward us with heaven. Even if a perfect work were possible for us or if we really did the best we could, such works would be less than the bare minimum demanded by God in the first place; perfection is what He is, and constant perfection is the minimum that He can accept. Not even a perfect work from us, therefore, could cancel out other imperfect works, much less blatant and deliberate sins.

Even conscience rejects and condemns such a one-sided and self-justifying delusion, especially in the day of tribulation or in the hour of death. At such times conscience cries out loudly and will not be silenced easily: "God is just and I am getting what I deserve!" The answers of human reason and emotion will give no assurance to an accusing conscience or certainty to the doubting soul when it feels the sting of adversity or ponders the hour of death and considers what it deserves for its sins.

Thus, if there is a solution for the problem of sin and sinfulness that is sure and certain, it must come from God Himself. He is the judge of all the earth. He alone must find the way to solve the desperate problem that we cannot solve. He alone must show the solution to the dilemma of an apparent irreconcilable opposition in His own attributes of justice on the one hand and love on the other.

To God be eternal thanks and praise and adoration! He did find a solution for our desperate and

hopeless condition. He did find a resolution that satisfies perfectly both His own justice and His grace, love, and mercy. The solution and the resolution revealed and given to us in His Word is summed up in one sublime name: JESUS CHRIST! To satisfy divine justice, He as the holy and spotless Lamb of God endured fully the punishment for the sin of the whole world (John 1:29). The punishment of death and the torments of the damned meted out to Him on the cross have a weight and a value, have merit that exceeds the weight and guilt of the sin of the whole world! In Him - and in Him alone - divine justice was satisfied. At the same time divine love and grace and mercy toward us have reached their sublime peak and are satisfied as well by that one supreme and all-sufficient sacrifice.

God's solution in Christ is a solution that is ultimately and divinely rational. And at the same time God's solution remains forever the ultimate divine mystery. For as rational as it is that the sacrifice of God Himself would be sufficient punishment and payment for the sins of the world, it is still a mystery; for no human being could have ever come up with this solution for our otherwise hopeless condition. The mystery has to be unraveled and revealed by God Himself. Who could imagine that the holy God in order to save His sinful and rebellious creatures would Himself become man and endure the torments of the damned in the place of the guilty? Who could conceive that He would do it all without any help from us, without our even willing it? It is simply inconceivable to human reason and our own imagined wisdom, so inconceivable that it takes a miracle to believe it, the miracle of faith created and sustained by God alone through the gospel in Word and sacraments. Thus, this sublime and divine wisdom remains foolishness to human reason, even though it is ultimate wisdom and perfect reason (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16).

God's Word fills us with joy and gladness in the person, work, and offices of Christ. For Christ is our life and our salvation. Even the angels in heaven delight to ponder the mystery of all that He has done for our salvation (1 Peter 1:12). If they delight in it, how much more reason do we have for whose sake the work of redemption was so perfectly accomplished by God Himself in Christ!