

Jesus stooped. Low enough to sleep in a manger, what carpentry shop, sleep and a fishing boat. Low enough to rub shoulders with crooks and lepers. Low enough to be spat upon, slapped, nailed, and speared. Low enough to be buried.

And then he stood. Up from the slab of death. Upright in Joseph's tomb and right and Satan's face. He stood up for the woman and silenced her accusers, and he does the same for you. Romans 8:34 *Jesus is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us.* Let this sink in for a moment. In the presence of God, in defiance of Satan, Jesus Christ rises to your defence, taking on the role of a priest.

Hebrews 10:21-22 *since we have a great priest over God's house, let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, because we have been made free from a guilty conscience.*

A clean conscience. A clean record. A clean heart. Free from condemnation. Not just for their past mistakes but also for future ones. Jesus trumps the devil's guilt with words of grace: Ephesians 2:5-10 <sup>5</sup> *Though we were spiritually dead because of the things we did against God, he gave us new life with Christ. You have been saved by God's grace.* <sup>6</sup> *And he raised us up with Christ and gave us a seat with him in the heavens. He did this for those in Christ Jesus* <sup>7</sup> *so that for all future time he could show the very great riches of his grace by being kind to us in Christ Jesus.* <sup>8</sup> *I mean that you have been saved by grace through believing. You did not save yourselves; it was a gift from God.* <sup>9</sup> *It was not the result of your own efforts, so you cannot brag about it.* <sup>10</sup> *God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us to do good works, which God planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.*

See the fruit of grace: saved by God, raised by God, seated with God. Gifted, equipped, and commissioned. Farewell earthly condemnation:

stupid, unproductive, slow learner, quitter, cheapskate. No longer. You are who Jesus says you are: spiritually alive. Heavenly positioned. Connected to God. A billboard of mercy. An honoured child.

Satan is left speechless and without ammunition.

Romans 8:33-34 <sup>33</sup> *Who can accuse the people God has chosen? No one, because God is the One who makes them right.* <sup>34</sup> *Who can say God's people are guilty? No one, because Christ Jesus died, but he was also raised from the dead, and now he is on God's right side, appealing to God for us.*

The accusations of Satan sputter and fall like a deflated balloon. Then why, pray tell, do we still hear them? Why do we, as Christians, still feel guilt?

Not all guilt is bad. God uses appropriate doses of guilt to awaken us to sin. We know from God's word that God given guilt causes indignation, alarm, longing, concern and readiness to see justice done. That kind of guilt brings enough regret to make us change. Satan's guilt, on the other hand, brings enough regret to enslave us.

When God looks at you and me, he sees Jesus first. The Chinese language the character for righteousness is a combination of two other characters, the figure of a lamb and a person. The lamb is on top, covering the person. When God looks down at you that is what he sees: the perfect Lamb of God covering you. It boils down to this choice: do you trust your advocate of your accuser?

I subscribe to a blog written by a former minister of ours, Kenny Borthwick, and today he wrote this:

*Rather, your dis-ease is there as God's invitation to take others into the waters that you yourself have tasted but held back from ministering in.*

*You have been on deeper waters yourself and looked into them with awe. You have glimpsed limitless love, limitless power, limitless wisdom, limitless faithfulness, a limitless unfaltering purposefulness, and never altering righteousness and holiness and mercy. You have met with God. "We speak of what we know." Speak of what you know of the unchanging God of the Bible who is the God of your experience too.*

*God got you on to these waters. He can get others there too. Just be a witness to speak of what you have seen and heard. Speak of what you know.... it will help some to long to swim where they cannot feel ground beneath their feet, to swim in a place where they cannot feel or see an edge or bank to hold on to, to be in an open sea, where they are aware of movement around them and underneath them over which they have no control and is beyond their knowledge.*

*Some are longing for that place where they are out of their depth in God.*