

O Lord God enter not into judgment with us, who have not from the heart kept Your commandments, but still regard the precious merit of Your dear Son, and let us ever be partakers of His righteousness. Enable us also by Your Holy Spirit to walk in Your fear, true faith, and holiness of living, and to beware of pride and security, that we may not be cast into everlasting prison, but enter into Your eternal kingdom; through Your dear Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen. (The Lutheran Liturgy, companion altar book for The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 145)

When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually. And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And Shimei said as he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! The LORD has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood." Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head." But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'" And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today." So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust. And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself.

In Christ Jesus, who was unjustly reviled but did not revile in return, but bore up under all false accusations to be named sinner for you, dear fellow redeemed:

Recently I received a notice from Delta airlines about their policy: "*Zero tolerance for racism, bigotry and hateful acts*". My guess is they do not tolerate murder, theft, open rebellion, as well. But what about taking the name of the Lord God in vain, blasphemy, lust, gossip, coveting? They probably tolerate those actions. So their moral standard is rather low, when compared to God's standard. As we were reminded in our Gospel lesson today from Jesus' sermon on the Mount: **No Level of Unrighteousness is Acceptable to Our Righteous Lord.**

## I

The relative of King Saul, Shimei, seemed to have a very high standard as well. It probably matched the standard of the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. You might recall the one Pharisee's prayer in the temple when the tax collector was also present: *"I thank God I am not like other men are ... even this tax collector."*

Shimei connected the rebellion of David's son Absalom to David's dealing with King Saul. Now there was a connection with Absalom's rebellion and David's sin, but it was not found in his dealings with Saul, rather with the sins related to Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband. Yet to a truly humbly repentant believer in Christ, ill treatment in this life is viewed as well deserved, regardless if it can be directly related to a specific sin.

Have you ever been slandered with an accusation of something for which you were not guilty? It is hard not to defend yourself and deny such a false accusation especially spoken before others. But in truth do you not find that as bad as such an accusation is, you have done, said or thought even worse things, which if known would make this lie seem small in comparison? While our lying neighbor does not know such things to convict us beyond measure, God knows. Nothing is hidden from His sight. And we know no level of unrighteousness is acceptable to our righteous, holy Lord God.

David's response to Shimei's slander shows such an acknowledgment on David's part as a repentant sinner. David was a man of blood, however not Saul's blood, but Uriah's instead. So when one of David's men said referring to Shimei: "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head." David responded: "If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

Now of course we could say that God was not commanding Shimei to curse David with these words, but our Lord was allowing him to do it and David acknowledged he even deserved worse. Again David remarks: "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today." David was not somehow thinking he was doing penance for his sin through Shimei's words and actions, but rather that through this wrongful treatment, David would remain the humble servant King God had called him to be.

## II

Your level of unrighteousness, my fellow sinners is not acceptable to the Lord either, neither is mine. By ourselves we stand condemned, eternally condemned. As Jesus said, “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

You may find solace in that most of your neighbors know nothing about your many deeds, words and thoughts of evil. If you ever fly on Delta, like I do, you will likely never be found out in regard to their standard of intolerance. But those closest to you certainly know more of your unrighteousness. By God’s grace you on occasion speak your words of apology to them and are forgiven. But what about God who knows all that you do, say and think? Do you apologize to Him for everyone of those misdeeds? – of course not. Yet He does forgive generously and completely.

David, in one of his psalms, pleads for God’s mercy and forgiveness even for his hidden faults, things he does not even remember to confess. David was like you. You do not remember to name all your sins before God. As we normally do in our services, we confess in general to a host of sins unnamed and oft forgotten. Because you have come to know God in Christ Jesus your Savior, you know that He does not curse you along the way of your life, nor does He pelt you with stones of retribution. But we like David do grow weary at times because we condemn ourselves and beat ourselves up, maybe with restless nights, or distracted days.

So just as David found refreshment, so do we, freely offered by our gracious Lord. It is found alone in the One whom God has sent to take our place. As noted earlier, when Jesus was reviled unjustly accused of all manner of sin, He did not find it necessary to revile his accusers in turn. They would have deserved it, of course. But Jesus came here for the exact purpose of being wrongly named the sinner for you and me, and all people. All your rightly deserved accusations of sin have been borne by your Lord Jesus and paid for with the eternal punishment you rightly deserve. Apart from Him your level of unrighteousness remains eternally unacceptable to your holy and eternal God.

Interestingly David found refreshment at the Jordan river. Most of our spiritual refreshment had its beginning in that same place. Jesus was baptized there as our Substitute before the Father. As the Father declared He was well pleased in His Son our Substitute, so in our holy baptism we are declared well pleasing to Him today. How refreshing it is to hear that all our sins are forgiven and that we stand washed clean, justified before the Father, in Word and Sacrament.

How do you fare under the onslaughts of your false accusers? Do you want to make sure they are proven wrong, so that you might justify yourself before them and many others? Oh that our Lord would work such humility in us as He did for David that we could bear up under all such curses, knowing we deserve far worse, but also trusting that in Christ we alone are justified before God in heaven.

There is only one level of righteousness that is acceptable to God, it is the righteousness Jesus produced for us by His absolute perfect life lived in our place. While Jesus could step aboard a Delta flight today and be holy in every respect, my guess is He could very well be assailed for some man-made guilt that would assuage the conscience of His Pharisaical condemners. But all such curses mean nothing to God who alone sets the standard for all eternity. In Christ you are eternally judged acceptable before God. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.