

The Authorities Whom God Has Placed Over Us

I Samuel 24:2-23, Trinity Sunday IX

August 9, 2009

Beloved of the Lord.....Next to our Bible, our catechism is the greatest of treasures which we should hold dear to our heart. We treasure our catechism not because it contains the good words of Luther, but the blessed Words of God. All the chief doctrines of the Bible are contained in our catechism in a short and sweet way. Sadly, while many Lutherans have never taken the time to read through the Bible even once, most have read through their entire catechism. What a tragedy it is that once we are confirmed, our catechism gets dusty on a shelf, or packed away in a box, or even lost. If you do not know where your catechism is now dear Christian, I urge you to look for it and find it when you get home today. Begin to review again with joy the chief parts of your catechism. There you will again hear your Lord Jesus speak, and there you will again be strengthened and edified by the God of all Comfort. For God has caused "all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning", that we may "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them." Study your catechism daily.

In my catechism the heading for the fourth commandment reads, "The Authorities Whom God Has Placed Over us". The fourth commandment is not just about obeying father and mother, but also all other God-given authorities such as stepparents, teachers, employers, elders and grandparents, pastor and rulers. "God forbids us to despise our parents and other superiors by disregarding their dignity or provoking them to just anger by disobedience or by any other kind of wickedness." When we disrespect God's representatives, it is the same as saying to our Lord Jesus "I will not obey you nor listen to you for I despise you." Would we ever dare to say this to our Lord who first loved us? Let us not despise God's representatives but rather serve, serve and obey them, and hold them in love and esteem.

This is what David did though it was by no means an easy task to honor his God-anointed king. Saul wanted nothing less than to murder David. When Saul learned David was hiding in the Wilderness of Engedi [Ain-jidy], Saul went after him with 3000 chosen soldiers. David was hiding in one of the many caves in the steep limestone hills west of the Dead Sea. Saul unknowingly entered the cave where David was hiding to "cover his feet", to perform that necessary bodily function. Having set certain garments aside, David

was able to cut off a portion of Saul's robe without Saul knowing.

In the words of David thereafter, we see he stands as a model for all Christian regarding our enemies in authority. Even if they abuse their office we are still to respect their office. While David was already anointed to be the future king, he did not usurp or take his office by force, but trusted God would take care of all. David even resisted the temptation to murder saying, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed."

When I read this lesson in Scripture I always stand in awe of David's humble words. Hunted and pursued like a dog, Saul once throwing a javelin at him, David yet honored Saul's office AND David did not usurp God's holy office as Judge. You can almost hear the emotion in David's voice when he speaks to Saul from a distance, "I have not sinned against thee, yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee, but mine hand shall not be upon thee!" Oh how David must have longed that this terrible persecution be over, yet he would not let Saul's evil overcome him so that he did evil. David would overcome Saul's evil by doing good.

David's love for David's Lord kept David from sinning against Saul, the Lord's anointed. So the Bible says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil....as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" Rom. 12. What can I as a pastor add to these words? They are crystal clear and beyond dispute. Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

There are those in our world today who reason that if we have an evil government, we do not have to obey them. But is government evil? NO! Government in itself is a good thing, a divine institution created by God for man's benefit. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Are there men in office who abuse the power God has given them? Yes, indeed it is so - but God is their Judge, not you, not me. Should we condemn the evil they have done? Yes by all means, but only with God's Word, only with God's

love, and only with the understanding that God will judge us for every word we speak. Whenever we seek to correct those in error, we must be like that humble shepherd David who humbly trusted in His Good Shepherd, that Heavenly King above. David humbly appealed to Saul's conscience reminding Saul that the Lord would judge "between me and thee." We should speak in such a way that the guilty confess their guilt. After David had spoken, not only did Saul weep and cry in the knowledge of his sin, but "he said unto David, Thou art more righteous than I."

On the Last Day the true Lord and Judge of us all will visibly return in all His glory. "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad." Those whose works were evil will be judged as guilty and rightly condemned to everlasting damnation. Those whose works were good will inherit everlasting life. But doesn't this mean that Christians will be damned also? Haven't we all committed the same evil works as unbelievers? Which of us could say we've always obeyed those whom God has placed in authority over us? But here is the question, dear Christian: if you are sorry for your sins and you trust in the merits of Christ, does God count your evil works against you? Aren't you counted as righteous through His blood? Thus regarding the Last and Final Judgment of God understand this, God sees the works of believers through the light of the Gospel. The Gospel and not the law, is God's standard of judgment on Judgment Day. Jesus said, "The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the Last Day." This is the Gospel Word, for the Bible says, "He will judge the world in Righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained."

This righteousness by which that Man Christ judges the world, is the Gospel Word which freely offers and gives the Righteousness of Christ to the whole world. The Bible says, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." This is why Jesus said, "Ye are clean THROUGH THE WORD which I have spoken unto you." Think now of the many times you disobeyed your parents as a child, or dishonored your elders, or despised any of God's representatives! On the cross with divine love, Jesus paid for these sins with His own blood - therefore you are clean indeed through this Gospel Word He has spoken! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." Thus when our blessed Christ returns on that blessed and

Last Day, Christ our blessed Savior will not see and condemn us for our evil works which He has cast behind His back into the depths of the sea, rather He will see His own righteousness which He has placed upon us, the garment of faith, that spotless and white wedding dress. We will then hear Christ speak perhaps the most sweet and blessed words ever to be spoken, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Ah how sweetly those words will ring in our ears for all eternity! What a tragedy it is then likewise to know that all unbelievers who stubbornly refused to receive Christ and His forgiveness, such will indeed be judged and condemned for all their evil works on that Last Day. They will then hear the Judge speak those most dreadful words of condemnation, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Beloved of the Lord, we do not need to fear such a fate as this if only we place our faith and hope in that Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. For "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." God cannot and will not condemn those who believe on Him. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already." Unbelief alone damns, BUT FAITH ALONE saves! Jesus said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." Throughout our life each believer then is much like David. The Saul's of this world hunt us down and persecute us, yet God is our Shield, an invisible wall of defense around us. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" "The Lord is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our King!" Trust in this King daily dear Christian and rejoice! In the end you will see Him face to face, and your heart will rejoice. Amen.

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