

All Through One
1 Timothy 2:5:6

September 18, 2016

18th Sunday After Pentecost

Have you ever been between a rock and a hard place? Obviously, it's not an actual *place*. Rather, being "between a rock and a hard place" is an expression describing a situation in which you have two equally difficult or unacceptable choices. I've heard people describe our upcoming presidential election as one in which voters are caught between a rock and a hard place. Nobody wants to be caught between a rock and a hard place. It can cause great harm. Yet it can happen quite often, even in our spiritual lives. When it comes to finding spiritual fulfillment and salvation, we are all caught between a rock and a hard place.

Think about it. On the one hand, we look for fulfillment in this world and the things of this world. The good things God has made can take care of our needs and provide for our enjoyment and that's good and God-pleasing. However, material goods cannot provide ultimate or lasting fulfillment. When we try to make them do that (as we often do), the things of this world lead us away from God and into sin. St. John warns us in his first epistle, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires." (1 John 2:15-17)

This world has been corrupted by sin as we have been corrupted by sin. As a result of this corruption, we do evil in our thoughts, our words, and our deeds which God has clearly commanded us not to do. We fail to think the good, speak the good, and do the good which God has clearly commanded us to do. Where does that leave us? Collecting the wage which our sin earns for us which, the Word of God says is death.

If all this world can ultimately offer us is sin and death, then we need to look elsewhere, not only for fulfillment, but also for salvation. So, on the other hand we have God. That seems to be a better choice, especially if we look to God as He has been redefined today. Today, God is viewed as an "old softie" - a deity who accepts us just the way we are. He is there to make us happy by giving us what we want when we need Him and otherwise leaving us alone when we don't need Him. He makes no demands of us other than that we "be nice".

But this is not the one true God – the God of the Bible. The true God has a specific will which He has made known to us in His Word. He does not accept violations of His Law but is angry when it is broken. His wrath burns white hot over sin and against those who commit it.

The true God also judges sin and punishes those who do it. The judgment is absolute. There are no exceptions and no excuses. The punishment is severe. For those who wish to follow the first sinners - Satan and his band of rebellious angels - God will allow them to spend eternity in the place God created for Satan and his band of rebellious angels – hell, a place which, the Bible says, is a place where the worm does not die and the flame is not quenched.

Do you see how we are stuck between a rock and a hard place? When looking for fulfillment, rescue from this life, and hope for the life which is to come, we are faced with two difficult choices. On the one hand, we have this world which offers us sin and death. On the other hand, we have God who offers us wrath and condemnation. What a terrible choice!

What we need is someone who can come between us and sin and death to protect us, on the one hand, and to come between us and God's wrath and condemnation to shield us, on the other hand. And that is who we have. In our text, Paul says it this way, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all."

A mediator is someone who goes between two disputing parties to resolve conflict and bring about peace. That's what Jesus has done for you to get you out from between a rock and a hard place.

Jesus got between you and your sin by taking your sin away from you and shouldering the entire burden Himself on the cross. He gave Himself as a ransom for you – a payment – to free you

from the debt you owed God because of your sin. His blood, shed on the cross in death as that payment, frees you from the guilt which your sin has incurred.

Jesus got between you and death by undergoing death for you. His death overcomes death's victory, nullifies death's power, and ultimately does away with death itself. Jesus shows this by rising from the dead and leaving His tomb in victory. He promises that same victory to all who are connected to Him by faith. Although each of us will have to experience death (unless we are still alive when the Lord returns), death cannot frighten us, hold us, or defeat us. This mortal body will put on immortality at the resurrection of the dead. As St. Paul put it to the Corinthians,

“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:51-57)

Jesus got between you and the wrath of God over your sin by living holy and perfect in your place and for your sake. Christ's holiness is like a giant shield which deflects His anger away from you. His holy life saves you from God's righteous anger. As His bloody death makes you right with God by removing your sin, His holy life saves you from God's wrath by giving you His holiness. The Word of God says, “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” (Romans 5:9-10)

Finally, Jesus gets between you and the condemnation of God by being condemned Himself in your place. On the cross, Jesus experienced the full weight of God's wrath against your sin, the condemnation of your sin, and the punishment for your sin. He was separated from His Father while on the cross, thus experiencing what true condemnation of sin means: separation from God. But Jesus underwent all of that for you and in your place so that you might never be condemned. The Word of God promises, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

You've been freed from being stuck between a rock and a hard place. You've gone from two very difficult and unacceptable choices to two easy and very welcome choices. When you look to the earth and your life and situation here and see sin and death, there is no need to feel guilt or fear. The mediator Christ Jesus has done His work. By His death, He has forgiven all your sin and removed all your guilt. By His resurrection, He has overcome death and transformed it from the punishment of sin to the entrance to life eternal.

When you look to the heavens and see God's wrath and condemnation, there is no need to be afraid or despair. The mediator Christ Jesus has done His work. By His holy life lived for you, Jesus has deflected God's wrath from you and shielded you from it. By being condemned in your place, Jesus has freed you from any and all condemnation and gained salvation for you.

We are able to live our lives in the present at peace with God through our mediator Christ Jesus. All conflict has been resolved. We are able to anticipate our lives in the future after death with hope through our mediator Christ Jesus. All debt has been taken care of. There is no rock. There is no hard place. We are only between peaceful life with God here and a joyful life forever with God in heaven. And that's a pretty good place to be. Amen.