



The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

O GOD, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee; Mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity* (Habakkuk 1:13a)

There may appear a seeming impasse for imperfect children of God in this prayer, but it is only apparent and not real. How can those imperfect professors of Christ please God in their imperfections when God cannot look upon the slightest sin and wickedness, especially in view of this fact: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23) If we had continued reading in Romans 3, we would have read that it is righteousness by Faith in Jesus Christ by which we are all justified. God the Father views us in light of the imputed righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ! It is our faith that brings us into that covering of Grace for all our sins.

O GOD, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee So, apart from Christ, there can be no salvation. Without Christ, there is no reconciliation of the sinner to the terms of justification and salvation to God. We must have that nature and mind that was in Christ imparted to our own natures and minds. Even the will to do good cannot exist in a heart that does not belong to God. ***An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.*** (Proverbs 21:4) Though our pride and vanity are our ancient stumbling blocks to keep us from righteousness, even the small things of life that seem good are not so with God. Now, I am sure you will agree, the plowing of a field seems to be commendable labor. It certainly is so in the eyes of men, but to God, even that seeming good thing is sin when performed by those who are not of the household of God and who harbor wickedness in their hearts.

Doubt not! All who are depending upon their own righteousness are wicked. Every heart born into the world needs a purifying and cleansing purge. That purge is

Christ and His shed blood! So the Collect opens with a profound truth upon which the petition that follows in good order is contingent – **we are not good without the goodness of God.** Our good works are not our own, but His who died for us and MADE us into the sons and daughters of God.

Mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts
Even our rudimentary petitions must start, not with our own worth, but MERCY – and that mercy is of God to us. The very services that we perform out of love to God and man are not ours, but result from that MERCY of God through the efficacious workings of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Why is this so? Because even that love we demonstrate to others is borrowed and not our own – it comes from God in His Mercy. Remember those Tables of Law written in Stone? ***Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;*** (2 Corinthians 3:3-5) This is, indeed, good news to the saved. We are not perfect in our ways, and we KNOW it! But God has imputed a love of righteousness in our hearts that causes us to obey His Law of Love. We know that our righteousness falls far short of God's standard, but our love of God, and His Son Jesus, will bring us to obedience in the things of the law. ***Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*** (Proverbs 10:12) How many sins will love cover? All sins!

Now you may smugly satisfy your ego that you have such an abundance of love that your sins are all covered, right? Wrong, it is not your own love that covers all of your sins, but the Love of Christ that has covered all sins – and He broadcasts that Love into the hearts of those who know Him as Lord and Savior. Does this truth make the Law of none effect? Not at all, but it makes it a greater joy to please and obey God out of our gift of Love than from the uncompromising restraint of Law written on Tables of Stone.

We see in the latter part of the petition of this Collect an acknowledgment that our obedience and goodness are not native to the human heart, but directed by the Holy Spirit that rules in every heart born of God.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Were our petitions of imputed righteousness based on any name other than that of the One who paid our sin-debt, our prayer would fall on the bleak ground of our own helplessness. It was Christ who bought us, and it is in Christ's name by which we ask the blessing. Are you good? ***"There is none good but God!"***