



The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity
The Collect.

O LORD, we beseech thee, absolve thy people from their offences; that through thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. 29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. (Romans 3:21-31)

Following on the heels of the somber message of Habakkuk, I will now turn to a glorious provision made for those of us of faith in Christ. So often do we confuse the terms of the law with that grace granted in Christ. We often consider that God has a "list, and He's checking it twice...gonna find out whose naughty or nice!" This message does not square with the Lord of the Bible. Certainly, if we are without the provisions of grace made available through the shed blood of Christ at Calvary, we are held to the very strict terms of the Law which no man can satisfy. God does not need to keep tabs on the number of offenses of those under the Law for one offense deserves the fires of Hell. God can tolerate no unrighteousness at all in His Heaven. He is, above all, Holy

and righteous. He demands that we, too, be Holy and righteous if we will spend an eternity in His blessed company. So by what means can we be considered in the eyes of God as Holy and Righteous. If we are trying to EARN Heaven by our goodness and commendable works, we are hindered by a multitude of Scriptural Truths to the contrary. "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (see vv23 above). ALL covers quite a large field, doesn't it?

How can we be considered righteous when there are "none righteous, no not one"? *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one* (Romans 3:10) Has God the Father forsaken all members of the crown of His Creation to the jaws of Hell? No, He has not. He made an eternal provision for them in the Councils of Heaven long before the earth was formed, or you and I were a twinkle in our father's eye. Knowing that man's free will is arbitrary and in constant conflict with that perfect will of God, the Father made provision for that free and sinful will of man be cast off and that perfect Mind of Christ be taken upon our souls which would cause us to love and obey God in His Will and not our own reckless and free wills. If our wills are yet free, than they are not conformed to that Mind which was in Christ. The sinner must surrender his free and sinful will in exchange for that perfect will of God, His Sovereign and King. Grace is the provision, purchased by Christ, whereby that exchange can become reality. Please know that the Law was not annulled by Christ, or even circumvented. It was through the very provisions of the demands of the Law that Christ purchased our salvation. The soul that sins must die according to the Law. However, Christ – the Fountain of Life and Love – submitted to that death sentence of the Law on the behalf of all who would accept that sacrifice through faith. He was perfectly righteous and without sin, yet He took upon Himself our sins (and the sins of the world) so that all who believe may be accounted righteous before God.

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb 9:24-28) As the Thirty-first Article reads (of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion): "*THE Offering of Christ once made in that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.*" Not regarding the Holy Communion as a Mass and a sacrificing of Christ anew, the AOC has refrained from the practice of over-frequent Communion services to avoid it becoming like unto that idol of Rome.

Augustine of Hippo, in his Confessions, lays all of the claim he makes in Christ at the feet of Grace. Once coming to knowledge of the Person of Christ, he says: "*You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am on fire to attain the peace which is yours.*" Augustine *Confessions* translated by Henry Chadwick. (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1992).

We have no personal righteousness, even as devoted followers of Christ. But we do have His imputed righteousness to cover our sinful flesh. That is Grace, satisfied under the terms of the Law, by Christ!

You will note that these mysteries of grace and salvation are all personal to the believer and not national. So what impact the national message of Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Isaiah, et al.? It is not unlike the nation as the congregation gathered at the Morning Prayer. The sermon has personal application to each present. The message of Christ to the nations is a personal Gospel message directed to collective hearts of the nation. A faithful church is known by its faithful members. Nations who fear God are known by the faithfulness of her citizens. If our nation is to be saved from ruin, the issue does not hinge on merely electing the right leader – it is dependent upon the nation coming to Christ one heart at a time. Those collective hearts, devoted to Christ and His righteousness, shall be reflected in the leadership such a people elevate to public trust. Such a nation will become like unto that nation established upon these fair shores more than two centuries ago by a God-fearing people. Are you one of them? If so, get busy in your duty to claim this land for Christ!