

## IN NOMINE JESU

### **There is power in the name of God.**

**Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

The text for the sermon today is the reading from Romans which you just heard.

Today we celebrate the Eve of the Name of Jesus, and through that celebration we are reminded about the amazing love of God that was shown to us through the sacrifice of Christ.

The text in Romans paints a picture of a courtroom drama; this is a drama in which God the Father is Judge, and we are brought into the court as the accused party. The record of our sin has been opened up, and we expect terrifying judgement to be poured out. What a way to close out 2018 with all of its apparent judgement.

If this was any other courtroom, it would be an open and shut case. The evidence against us is overwhelming and damning, literally. There is no way for us to hide what we've done, or escape punishment by being dishonest; no lie we tell will trick the judge and nothing we could offer with our good works or property could bribe Him.

With just us before God, we don't stand a chance... But it isn't just us. Since we are "Christ-ians" we bear the name of someone else; the name of "Christ Jesus", and there is power in the name of God. Where did we get that name?

When we were baptized we had the name of God placed on us. That name of God; The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit, was placed over our last name. The name that we inherited from our family before us brought with it a certain identity established by our ancestors, an identity of sin and guilt, good memories and bad

memories. With this new name of God placed on us, however, that identity is covered over with the new identity of a child of God.

Because we are now God's children, we no longer have to stand there as a defendant in the courtroom with nothing but our own name, but instead, with the name of God on us, we have God on our side. God is for us. God is for you - He is your Advocate.

The reading from Romans lays out this relationship that we have with God. Paul begins this section by saying this:

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?<sup>1</sup>*

With God on our side, the dynamic of the courtroom drama is turned upside down. No longer are we standing there to defend ourselves before an unknown judge; exposed with no way out. Instead we now have a name, The Powerful Name, of the One on our side.

The name of your defender carries with it the history of his defense. If you go to court and your defense lawyer's name is something like Atticus Finch, for example, or maybe Perry Mason, or even Ben Matlock, you *know* your case is in good hands. Anyone who is familiar with any of these names would know the power that these names carry, their ability to provide legal defense is almost unmatched. Almost.

These famous fictional lawyers, Finch, Mason, and Matlock, were able to beat unbeatable odds to prove the innocence of their clients. The problem is, however, that you and I are not innocent; we are obviously and undeniably guilty! So even with names that carry that much weight as lawyers, what good could they possibly do for us?

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:31, ESV

We would have to have a lawyer so good that not only could He defend an innocent person from punishment, but that He could even get a guilty person spared. Can you imagine sitting in the court of a great judge and trying to pull a fast one, to try to use dishonesty to avoid punishment?

Maybe you've seen someone caught in a lie in the court of a great judge. Have you seen what happens when a great judge, say a Judge Judy, or a Judge Bowman, catches the defendant in a lie? How much more terrible would the wrath of God, the greatest judge, be when a person piles lies onto their already massive pile of sins?

So without being dishonest, how could anyone possibly stand up for us against God? Who could stand in His presence and defend a guilty man?

Paul continues in Romans with this:

*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?<sup>2</sup>*

Jesus is the son of God. Jesus is God. We bear the same name as Jesus, the same name as The Father, our judge. That is Who is on our side.

When we were baptized, not only did we receive this name of God on us, this name which connects us to the perfect familial love of the Father, but we also gave our name to Jesus. Along with our name, all of our sin was taken as well, as well as any sin we inherited from Adam and our ancestors.

Jesus takes this name, and this sin of ours, and in our place He accepts the punishment. That's how He does it, that's how the perfect Defender protects the accused from the consequences of their actions without any dishonesty, He suffers the consequences Himself.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:32, ESV

At the same time, this Judge who loves His son dearly and perfectly, is willing to pour out the just punishment for sin on Him so that all our debts are paid. If that perfect judge is willing to let so much suffering happen to His own Son for your sake, how could you ever question His love for you?

So who is there to object? Who is there to level accusations against us with God on our side? Who could possibly oppose God's love and justice? If you think you have the answer to that question, stick with me for a moment.

These are exactly the points that Paul makes in the reading, he continues with this:

*Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.<sup>3</sup>*

“Who will bring charges in this courtroom?” This is the question that Paul asks. The question seems hypothetical at first; who could possibly deny what God has decided? Who could possibly hope to argue against God's justice? Obviously it isn't possible to say that someone that has been elected and justified by God is not-elect, and is not-justified. So the answer to the question is “No one”, since no one could possibly argue such a thing.

The question “Who will bring charges in this courtroom?” is also a literal one. There was someone who brought charges initially, there was someone who hated you so much that he wanted to see you damned for your sin. This person, however, this accuser is conspicuously absent from the courtroom. The accuser is not present to bring up charges, not just because the charges have been paid for by Christ's death on

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:33-34

the cross, but because the accuser himself has been found guilty. No one is there to bring charges against God's elect; the only ones left in the courtroom are all on your side, and everyone, you included, share in the same name of God.

Paul talks about those things on earth which tried to separate us from Christ:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?<sup>4</sup>*

Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword; these are all things that Christians suffer while on the earth. Having the name of Christ on us guarantees us salvation in that final day, but in the meantime the world and the things of the world war against us.

Paul was very familiar with these struggles that he mentions; he spent much of his Christian life in prison and in physical danger of one sort or another. Likewise Paul comforts us fellow Christians by reminding us that these things may be able to hurt us now, but they have no power to remove us from the love of God.

Paul continues in his exhortation for the Christians:

*As it is written,*

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;*

*we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

The Christian life is one of persecution. There are times when the persecution is more severe than others. There are even times when Christians should expect that their very life will be threatened because they bear the name of Jesus Christ.

Paul doesn't diminish these threats; they are real threats. Christians might be intimidated by fear of what will come. At the end of it all, however, Paul makes it clear

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:35, ESV

that though the battle on earth will have much suffering, those who bear the name of Christ will be made victorious.

Paul says this:

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.<sup>5</sup>*

We are “More than conquerors”, Paul says, or if you prefer the literal Greek translation, “we are SUPER-Conquerors through Him who loved us.”

For all the greatness of those things in life which threaten us - great names of persecutors, and great names of disasters - the greatness of the name we bear in Christ is far more. There may be evil conquerors in this world, but through Christ we are the Super-Conquerors who will be victorious on the Last Day!

Paul finishes this section with a final list of opponents to the Christians, even stronger than the last list. He writes:

*For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>6</sup>*

Nothing, no power, no accuser, nothing in all of creation, no physical distance, nothing that exists or will ever exist, no power of any magnitude can do a single thing against us! That’s what Paul is saying here; there is nothing in all of creation that can threaten the love that God has for us.

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:37, ESV

<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:38-39, ESV

When Jesus died on the cross for our sins and raised from the grave, that was permanent. That was the slam of the gavel in our court case. That was the Judge meeting out all of the punishment, and declaring all debts to be paid.

There is nothing that was, that is, or that will come to pass that can ever take away that judgement that God has established. God loves us so much that He took our name and gave His name to us, He took our name which has no power, no weight, and gave us the name of greatest power.

The love of God is shown to us, and given to us in Christ Jesus, who came down from heaven and took on our human form, and suffered for our sins, and died our death, to give us His name, to give us His righteousness, to give us His body and His blood; to give us His love.

That should make a better end to 2018; and serve as a good prep for 2019!

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

Eve of the Name of Jesus, (Historic One-year series)  
Psalm 8; Isaiah 30:(8-14) 15-17; Romans 8:31b-39, Luke 12:35-40

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