

"Were You There When Jesus Was Accused?"—Luke 23:1-5

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "Were You There When Jesus Was Accused?", is Luke 23:1-5 → *Then the whole company of them arose and brought Him before Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a king." And Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "You have said so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

The desire to be right resides in every one of us. Observe conversations. When conversing about ways of doing things it is interesting how a person might react saying, "Well, what's wrong with doing it my way?" An interesting question, seeming to imply that choosing to do something one way means there's something automatically wrong with doing it another way. A person may go to great lengths in an effort to convince someone else that his perspective, ideal

or opinion is the right one. It may even lead to accusations and judgments upon another person which flow from sinful self-righteousness.

The sin of being so quick to accuse others reveals both the self-righteousness and selfishness of people in an effort to manipulate things to go their way and think they are righteous in their actions. This was the case in the accusations brought against Jesus by *the whole company of the Jewish Council* (cf. Luke 22:66) who *brought Him before Pilate*, the Roman governor. However, their behavior was nothing new to Jesus. He constantly had to contend with the self-righteousness of the Jewish leaders throughout His earthly ministry.

It is the nature of self-righteousness to see no need for a Savior **on God's terms**. These Jewish leaders knew they needed the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, Jesus told them in John 5:39-40 → *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, **yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life***. Even though they were looking for their Messiah based on searching the Old Testament Scriptures, they missed seeing its witness to Jesus. Why? Because Jesus told them they were sinners who needed Him but they choose to cling to their self-righteousness. Thus, as Jesus tried to get them to see their sin and their need for salvation through faith in Himself they

became more and more rebellious and angry. For instance, when Jesus referred to God as *His own Father*, these unbelieving Jews sought *all the more to kill Him*. Because they felt it was wrong for Him to make *Himself equal with God* (cf. John 5:18) through this statement, they also felt they were right in their desire to kill Him.

Self-righteousness is very quick to make an accusation about someone else purely on the basis of subjective perceptions and not on the basis of the objective truth. This was the dilemma which Pilate faced while questioning Jesus, only to conclude *I find no guilt in this man*. (verses 3-4) Their self-righteous rebellion led them to seek getting their way no matter what sinful methods had to be used. According to Matthew 26:59 *the chief priests and the whole council **were seeking false testimony** against Jesus that they might put Him to death*. They didn't even care if the accusations were true! Now, under false pretext, they try to get Pilate to do their dirty work for them.

The accusations of Jesus brought before Pilate in verse 2 of our text reveal their "ends justifies the means" selfish desire, accusing Him as saying, *"We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a king."* Interesting how these same men who considered tax collectors as traitors and the worst of sinners expressed a . . . concern . . . for the welfare of the Roman government? When you are so convinced that

you're right the temptation is very strong to sin by using any means, any rationalization, any pretext, any manipulation possible to convince others likewise. Even in our text verse 5 reveals their persistence in sin when they discover their previous efforts failed. *But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."* They accused Him of being a menace to society by riling up people? Let us not forget that His *teaching* had also stirred up many people **to forgiveness of sin, faith and eternal life!**

Such sinful behavior is nothing new. It is the fruit of your sinful heart along with Adam, who blamed God for his sin and accused his wife for misguiding him. (cf. Genesis 3:12) You may find yourself in company with Job's wife. Job 2:9 tells us that in the midst of such terrible suffering *his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die."* How many times have you felt "let down" **by God** in times of disappointment and trouble and then accused Him of not being faithful to you? Have you ever prayed faithfully to God and then after waiting and waiting accused Him of not answering your prayer by giving you **what you want?** Do you ever feel that God demands far too much of you and accuse Him of being overbearing? **The accusations continue.**

Actually "being right" was what it was all about for Jesus. He endured such accusations from sinners so that He could make it possible for you

to be right with God. It is in the very righteousness of the Accused —Jesus—that we accusers find the righteousness with which to stand before God. It is found in the realization that you too stand there with those people when Jesus was accused every time you sin with self-righteous accusations, then confess your sin of self-righteousness and trust in Jesus' Person & Work for you.

Reflecting once again on the example of Job, you can see such faith in the righteousness **of Jesus** at work in him as well. Even though he did not understand why such suffering was happening to him, *he said to his wife, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.* (cf. Job 2:10) His faith was focused on Jesus as he confessed in Job 19:25-26 → *I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.* His righteousness was found in Jesus by faith about two thousand years before Jesus came *to fulfill all righteousness!* (cf. Matthew 3:15)

In the midst of all the false accusations Jesus remained faithful to God's written Word so that He allowed Himself to die for your sin which the Holy Spirit reveals through that Word. Thus, He Himself was the righteous one throughout His passion. 1 Peter 2:22-25 says: *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was*

*reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him Who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. Through all that took place with His passion, Jesus remained sinless and restored to us God's righteousness!*

By faith in Jesus the Holy Spirit moves you to make the proper accusations in your life, based upon discernment in light of God's written Word and not based upon selfish, self-centered, self-righteousness. It starts with the accusation upon yourself as a sinner so that you can claim the proper judgment of God upon your sin **in Christ**. And what is that judgment. **"You are forgiven."** Any other judgments are based upon the work of Jesus with the desire to remain faithful to God's written Word ourselves as well as encourage others to remain faithful to His Word. Once again, you were there when Jesus was accused because it was for you to be righteous before God through His suffering, death and resurrection in which His accusations culminated. Amen.

*Now the righteousness of God has been manifested,*

*to which the Law and the Prophets*

*(i.e. the written Old Testament Scriptures) bear witness . . .*

*the righteousness of God*

*through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*

(Romans 3:21-22)

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.