

“And so you don’t lack any gift as you eagerly look for our Lord Jesus Christ to appear again. He will strengthen you to the end so that no one can accuse you of anything on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” – 1 Corinthians 1:7-8

After Jesus rode into Jerusalem, all of the important people tried to find ways to accuse him. First the Pharisees joined forces with the supporters of Herod by asking him whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus saw right through their trickery. He pointed to the coin with Caesar’s image on it and said, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” Then the Sadducees, who don’t believe in the resurrection, tried to stump him. They asked about a woman who was married and became a widow seven times. When they get into the resurrection, whose husband will she be? Jesus saw right through their attempts to mock the teaching of the resurrection. He explained that marriage is for this life. But we look forward to serving the living God. Then the Pharisees tried their hand again, asking him what the greatest commandment in the Law was. There were 613 of them. Jesus boiled them all down to loving God above all things and your neighbor as yourself.

In each of these attempts to trick Jesus, they were trying to get something on him. They were trying to find something to accuse him of. If he says that you shouldn’t pay taxes to Caesar, then they can accuse him of rebelling against the Romans. If he says that you should pay taxes to Caesar, then they can accuse him of betraying his fellow Israelites. If Jesus says that the woman will belong to one of her husbands, then they can accuse him of making her unfaithful to her other husbands. If Jesus picks any of the 613 commandments, then they can accuse him of relaxing the other commandments. None of these questions are meant to learn or teach anything about God, who he is, or what he has promised. Their purpose is only to trap and accuse.

But Jesus doesn’t fall for these tricks. He remains blameless. They are taking God’s Word and using it for their own political scheming. But Jesus remains blameless, because he keeps God’s Word focused on what it’s all about. Obedience to earthly authority is not about winning this or that power game on earth. It is about honoring God and his authority. Marriage and family is not about building up your own legacy, getting a big earthly inheritance, and winning the rivalry against your brother. God has established marriage and the family as a picture of the church who serves her Lord under his kingdom forever. And the law is not about this job being more important or more valuable than that job. It’s about loving God with your whole heart and your neighbor as yourself. Jesus remains blameless, innocent, free from any accusations, unstained from the envy and deceit of this world, because he keeps his eyes fixed on his Father’s will.

Here Jesus leaves us an example. He didn’t lack any gift. As he would say to his disciples, “All that the Father has is mine.” The Father declared to the Son, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.” Jesus is equal with God. He is God of God and Light of Light. He is the only begotten Son of the Father. He doesn’t need anyone to praise him or to approve of him. He already has the praise and approval of his Father who says, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” So when others rise up and try to find fault with him, he doesn’t even flinch. He is God’s Son. He is free. He knows what God’s will is. He knows what God’s Word is all about. So he stands his ground, not troubled by people trying to scrutinize and find fault in him. He remains focused on honoring his Father.

So follow Jesus’ example. You don’t lack any gift either. The Holy Spirit has taken what Jesus has, and he has declared it to you. The Father didn’t even spare his own Son, but he gave him up for us all. He gives to us everything good. He has made us his sons, his heirs of eternal life. So we know what his

Word is about. We don't need to fall for any tricks from those who try to find fault in us. Our sins are forgiven by the blood of the Son. God is for us. Who can be against us? So we simply make it our aim to please him. We know what his will is. We honor him. We love him. And we serve the neighbors he puts in our life.

And yet, these tricks of the devil still get to us, don't they? He doesn't stop distracting us from what God's Word is all about. He makes us think about the politics of this earthly life while forgetting about our citizenship in heaven. He weighs us down with the cares of the home so much that the promise of eternal life stops echoing in the walls of our houses. He makes us see the Bible as just a bunch of rules and our jobs and careers as a measure of our own achievements. This makes us forget that the Bible reveals to us our loving Savior and that our duties are given for the sake of our neighbor. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh don't stop striving to deceive, mislead, and drive us to despair over God's mercy. If Satan can get you to stop focusing on what the Bible is all about, then he can trap you and accuse you of all sorts of things.

This is why St. Paul reminds us of what we are focused on. You don't lack any gift as you eagerly look for your Lord Jesus Christ to appear again. We look to the coming of our Lord with a sure hope. It's as Paul says later in this same epistle, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Cor 11)" This is why God gives us the gift of his Holy Spirit. It's why he gives us his Word. It's why he has baptized us. It's why he gives us the body and blood of his Son. It is so that we would have confidence in his grace toward us and remain focused on what this Christian life is all about. He has made you rich in every way, forgiving you of your sins, showering you with his own righteousness, promising you his kingdom, all so that you would look with eager expectation for the coming of your Lord Jesus Christ. This means that whatever he has called you to do, whether it is in the civil realm where you pay your taxes and serve your fellow citizens, in the home where you honor your parents, serve your spouse, and train your children, or in the church where you learn his doctrine – no matter what duty he has given you – he is calling you to look forward to his coming.

And he promises that he will keep you blameless the entire way. Listen again to what St. Paul writes: "He will strengthen you to the end so that no one can accuse you of anything on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." God calls you to love your neighbor. He gives you neighbors to love in the civil realm as you strive to live at peace with all people as much as possible. He gives you neighbors in the realm of the home as you care for those of your own household. He gives you neighbors in the church as you learn and confess together his divine truth. And as he calls you to love, he doesn't leave you to your own strength to remain faithful. No, he himself will strengthen you to the end. As St. Peter says, God's power preserves your faith until you reach the salvation he has prepared for you (1 Pet 1:5). Jesus himself is the author and finisher of your faith (Heb 12). So no matter how much your conscience accuses you, no matter how much this world might threaten you, no matter how many temptations come your way, he who called you remains faithful. His righteousness continues to cover you. His blood continues to cleanse your conscience from sin and guilt so that you can be sure you are serving the living God.

This is why Jesus remained focused when his accusers were trying to distract him. He was focused on what God sent him to do for you. He remained locked in on what God's Word is all about. So after these big shots did their best to trip him up, he again brought everything to the main point. This time he

asked them a question, “What do you think of the Christ?” This is what the Bible and our entire life here on earth is about. It all comes back to this question. Who is the Christ? Whose Son is he?

Of course, he’s David’s Son. The Pharisees knew that much. But Jesus quotes from Psalm 110 where David himself writes, “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right until I put your enemies under your feet.’” David is clearly talking about Christ here. Who else would he be talking about? The Pharisees couldn’t see this. They couldn’t see that even David, the great king, submits to Christ. David, who engaged in more political battles, experienced more troubles at home, and talked more about God’s Word than anyone else, not only talked about Christ. He even worshiped the Christ. He called him his Lord. And David, that great king and writer of Scripture, looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ with an eager expectation. He looked forward to when Christ would put all things under his feet. Because David had a lot of accusations against himself. He knew many people wanted him to fall, and he was aware of his own sins before God. But he trusted in his Lord, in Christ, in his faithful God to justify him and keep him from all blame until his coming.

It’s good to ask questions about how you should behave toward the government. It’s good to ask questions about marriage and the afterlife. It’s good to learn God’s law. Why? It’s so that you would learn to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. But don’t forget about the main purpose of God’s Word. St. John says that these things are written so that you would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20). The whole Bible is about Christ, the Son and Lord of David, who took our place under the law, loved God with his whole heart, and saved us from sin and condemnation. So when we consider our duties in this life, as we talk about the life to come, we don’t do so as those who are under condemnation. But with consciences free from the law’s accusations, we remain in Christ, waiting eagerly for his appearing. Amen.