

Let us pray.

Lord, righteous and merciful God, do not punish us in Your hot displeasure, as we so richly deserve, but be gracious to us according to Your mercies, for we are poor and miserable. Do not remember the guilt of our many sins, but remember the bloody merits of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

There are always two types of people set before us in the Psalms.

We get this from Psalm 1:

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night...
The Wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*

There's always the blessed and always the wicked.

And what's so fascinating about these two is that the blessed think of themselves as the wicked,
while the wicked think of themselves as the blessed!

And as Luther said,

"It's an amazing thing: He who has no sin feels it and has grace; and he who has sin doesn't feel it and has no grace" (LW 14:157).

These are the two types of people: the blessed and the wicked.

And you, Christians, happen to be a bit of both!

How do you know you're wicked?

Because, when you read Psalm 38, and others like it, you think,

"But I don't feel that way at all!"

Or, "That guy must've had it really bad!"

You hear things like:

*"There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation;
there is no health in my bones." (38:3)*

"For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever before me." (38:17)

And once more,

"My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness" (38:5)

We have a tendency to hear this and think:

"But I don't stink!"

And this is our main problem, that we don't recognize the stench of our sin.

The arrows that sink into us go unnoticed.
 The heavy hand upon us is ignored.
 We're falling and fading, but we hardly realize how bad things actually are.
 In fact, it's not until we get caught,
 or until great suffering comes that we even begin to think about our sin.

That's the way of the wicked.
 It's being blind to our suffering,
 deaf to the Law, that Word of God, which shows us our sin.
 It's ignorance to who we are as sinners in a sinful world.

It's easy to run on auto-pilot.
 Easy to confess that general confession at the beginning of the service and not ever think of any
 real sin we've committed.

We admit often that we're sinners in general,
 but whenever we're faced up with something specific we fight, hide, conceal, and run for
 cover.
 We justify ourselves, make excuses, deny our fault, and always come out on top.

And even though we're deathly ill,
 even though the infection that *stinks and festers* within us is malignant,
 we say, "Oh, I'm fine. Thanks for asking."

That's the way of the wicked—
 and the way of the wicked will perish.

So, as Dr. Luther once said,
 "Don't waste any time not confessing your sins!"

Or, as it says in 1 John,
 "*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (1 Jn 1:8).

So let's admit our sin and not deceive ourselves any longer!
 Let's join with Psalm 38 in this prayer of repentance:
 "*I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin*" (38:18)

This confession, simple as it is, is the way of the blessed.

While sin causes great separation, both with God and man,
 confession of sin and our Lord's absolution bring us back.

They draw us back into the life of Christ, the life of community, the life of being whole.

It's the absolution, that word of forgiveness, that removes the arrows lodged in our heart.
 It's that message of sins forgiven that bring soundness into our flesh and health to our bones.

Unless God speaks that Word of the cross,
 unless He delivers to us the very body of Christ both by word and bread,
 we'll never rise from under the weight of that heavy burden of our sin.

We'll be crushed.

And those who are blessed,
 those who recognize their sin and detest the stench of their sinful wounds,
 won't waste any time confessing.
 They'll confess both the big and the small,
 the thoughts and the deeds.

The blessed think there's no one so bad as I am.
 And it's not a game they play, they really think this way.

They really feel the sorrow of their heart like the nails that entered Christ's hands.

And so they confess.

Every bit of suffering they endure they take as a sign to confess.
 If they're accused of wrongdoing, they confess.
 If their insurance premiums increase, they confess.
 If they pass a car accident on the side of the road, they confess.
 If another member in this body suffers with cancer or heart-ache, they confess.

The blessed are so tied to Jesus, who truly is the *Blessed man* of Psalm 1,
 that they confess the sins of the whole world as if they were their own.

And then they wait.

As Psalm 38 says,

"But for you, O Lord, do I wait; it is You, O Lord my God, who will answer." (Ps 38:15)

They wait for God's response, for the absolution, for forgiveness.
 They wait for the healing of their stinking wounds and the lifting up of their head.
 They await the day when suffering comes to an end and death is no more.

And so do you.

For you are the blessed.

You are those purchased and won by Christ the crucified.
 You aren't forsaken or forgotten or lost, but saved.

For the *Blessed Man* has made Himself one with you.

And in Him, in Christ, you are counted righteous and forgiven and free.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit