

**Introduction:** *“Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man”* (8:33). That’s a pretty big accusation by Jesus. I certainly wouldn’t want to be called “Satan” by God!

Let’s look at what has just transpired: This narrative between Jesus, Peter, and the disciples takes place right before the Lord’s Transfiguration on the mountain (9:2), and right after the unbelieving Pharisees and chief priests demand Jesus show them miracles (8:11-13), even though Jesus has just fed the four thousand (8:1-10).

And now Jesus asks, *“Who do you say that I am?”* (8:29). At first, it seems Peter confesses-rightly: *“You are the Christ!”* (8:29). But immediately afterward, Peter wrongly-rebukes Jesus, for Jesus *“began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and after three days, rise again”* (8:31).

This doesn’t fit into the way Peter has arranged the story, and Peter wants it his own way. He writes the story like this: Peter, the disciples, and Jesus are the good guys, and those elders and chief priests are the bad guys—but Jesus (who is the Christ!) is going to beat out those elders and scribes, show them who the real rabbi is. Peter sets his mind on the things of men, and then scolds Jesus for not doing likewise.

*“Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man”* (8:33). Jesus is the Christ, and He puts His mind on the things of God: He came to fulfill the everlasting covenant, the one God made with Abraham, but not in the way Peter’s story fits together. Peter cannot see past the mountain of earthly glory. Instead, he tells the story like it’s an “us vs. them” thing. Peter thinks he’s the main character of this story, and Jesus is going to help him win.

Let’s think about it a different way. In the past few months, Christians have had their hopes stifled by the outcome of the election, because abortion and anti-human politics now run rampant. Christians are frustrated with the legislation that has begun ignoring clear reason. Christians are enraged with the radicals who deny any kind of objective truth at all. The twitter feeds re-write the narrative, saying that Christians are full of hate, that the Word and Sacrament are nonessential fiction.

It’s very easy to write the story like this: The horrific events of 2020 America are the *“adulterous and sinful generation”* (8:38): and we Christians must suffer through it.

But wait! Did you catch the danger of what I just said? By writing the narrative this way, we have done exactly what Peter has done: We have aligned ourselves against our neighbor, and made it an “us vs. them” scenario. Yes, they’re attacking the Church, but that means they need Jesus now, more than ever. Unbelievers will be condemned to hell, but it is not you who does the condemning.

Your neighbor does not need your scorn, they need your prayers. You should pray for your enemies, and talk to them kindly, lovingly, charitably. They need to hear the firm hammer of God's Law, and the inviting call of God's Gospel. A disgruntled attitude toward them doesn't help—in fact, it is exactly what helps least.

It's what Jesus tells Peter: *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"* (8:34). Jesus isn't talking about the Pharisees and scribes, he's talking about Peter: He's talking about you! For you too are part of the *"adulterous and sinful generation"* (8:38). You aren't the main character of this story: Christ is! And the story of salvation isn't "us vs. them" either, it's a "Christ for all" story.

Deny yourself, and receive what Christ has said! Do not view your neighbor as an enemy, but look instead with compassion toward them! They need Christ's blood to forgive their sin as much as you need it. Set your mind on the things of God (8:33), *"For whoever would save his life"* by allowing his neighbor to condemn himself to hell, **loses his life** (8:35a). *"But whoever loses his life" "for the Gospel's sake,"* in trying to love their neighbor, and *"not ashamed of [Christ] and of [His] words,"* **will save his life** (8:35b,38). *"For what does it profit man"* to gain-back America 2020, but hope that the unbelieving woke crowd forfeit their souls to hell, and perish (8:36)? *"Get behind me, Satan!"* (8:33). Set your mind on the things of God: confess the Son of Man rightly!

Who does the Church say that Jesus is? He is the Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary. He did indeed *"suffer many things,"* like the doubtful re-writing of His life and ministry. He *"was rejected"* with scorn by our *"adulterous and sinful generation"* (8:31). He endured the sufferings you deserve, but also the suffering deserved by your neighbor. His endurance produced character, and His hope does not put us to shame (R5:4-5), for *"after three days, [he rose] again"* from the grave (8:31). We are not justified by being on the right side, or by being on the left. We are justified by faith alone, by the faithful blood of Christ alone (R5:1,9). Just as Abram received God's promise and a new name, we receive the new covenant in Christ's blood, and the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Set your mind on the things of God, on Jesus, who is the Christ, the Son of Man.** On the Last Day, He will come *"in the glory of His Father with the holy angels"* (8:38). And when He does, you can surely rejoice that *"Christ died for the ungodly"* (R5:5), because that's you. What else can you do, but rejoice in your sufferings (R5:3), for while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you (R5:8), reconciled you to the Father, and saved you by His own life (R5:10). **Amen.**