



SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Scripture: Romans 3:23-26 / 2 Corinthians 5:21

TITLE: When a Substitute is Better

Substitute. What comes to mind when I say “substitute?” Maybe it’s a substitute teacher. Maybe it’s a backup quarterback. Maybe it’s an understudy.

For me, I can remember this Thanksgiving many years ago where my mom produced the ultimate substitute blunder: tofurkey. That’s right—a fake turkey made from tofu. Let me tell you it was to-yucky! It was gross. In other words, substitutes are often undesired and less than impressive. But there is one substitute that is not only better than the original, but essential for our spiritual health. What am I talking about? Listen to Paul’s words in Romans 3:

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. ²⁴Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-26, NLT)

We are all sinners. Everyone one of us has sinned. I’m pretty sure we all have black belts and advanced degrees in sin. None of us escape it. And this sin separates us from God. But by grace – in other words, a gift – he makes us innocent from that sin. How? By providing us a substitute. Christ became our substitute and paid for our sins on the cross.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”

Jesus is God in the flesh. He never sinned. He was tempted to, but passed the test. And He imputes or transfers that perfect record onto each one of us who believes.

Now there’s some confusion about belief. Is it just saying “yes” to Jesus? Is it asking Jesus into your heart? No, it’s not so passive. Belief means to trust and to act accordingly. In other words, it’s not just talk. I may say I believe that my car will get me to work, but if I never get in it and drive, there’s a disconnect. I don’t really trust it. So when we believe or trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, it results in life reflective of that.

Today, I am thankful for Jesus being our substitute. He does for us what we could never do for ourselves.

So here's my challenge for you today: examine yourself and determine: do you truly believe in the sufficiency of Jesus' sacrifice, or are you still trying to earn or keep your Salvation by your good works? Do you believe with your mind, but you've never fully trusted in this, and never experienced that life-giving and life-transforming gift? I encourage you to do this today. When you do this, Friend, you will win the day.