

Pastor R.R. Krueger
Good Friday
1 Peter 2:24
18 April 2014

As our Lenten-tide comes to a close, we find that we have come full-circle. At our Ash Wednesday beginning, Pastor Arnold well held up the differences between the throne of King Solomon and the throne of Him, called King of the Jews. And, in full circle mode, we come back of King Jesus' Throne.

If your fellow-worshipper next to you or in front of you was not singing that hymn-insert, but listened only to you, could it be that he/she heard you sing, "*Throned upon the **awful** tree,*" when you know full well that you sang, "*Throned upon the **awe full** tree.*" Sound alike, but quite a difference, expansion, amplification between the two. Or, as good Lutherans would ask: "*What does this mean?*"

But the difference, the expansion, the amplification is more than Lutheran; it is most Biblical and Scriptural. For you know that, because of infallible inspiration of Scripture, God causes the more difficult ones. We might wonder why, in Deuteronomy, God instructed that a criminal executed by hanging on a tree should be taken down before evening and then added "because cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."

Paul, in Galatians, sheds some light on that Deuteronomy-curse when he points out that, in being crucified, Christ, as our substitute, became a curse for us. But it was some 10 years later that Peter picked up on what Paul said and gave expansion, amplification and, if you will, answered "What does this mean?" to Paul in Galatians and Moses in Deuteronomy.

And so it is, as promised, our Crucified King, sends the Holy Ghost among us on this Night of Nights and through the inerrant teachings of Holy Scripture, we are given a most blessed lesson in spelling.

THE CRUCIFIED KING'S LESSON IN SPELLING

- I. "Saul" would spell it "awful"
- II. "Paul spelled it "awe full"

And so, our text...Peter's – no, Christ's – answer to "What does this mean?" to both Galatians and Deuteronomy: "*Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.*"

From your Biblical knowledge, you recall that before he was "Paul" he was known as "Saul." Saul, the persecutor of Christians and of the Christian Church. He even admits to such. Listen to him describe himself: *(I) who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.* As such, as Saul, he would have sung that hymn-insert's opening line: "*Throned upon the awful tree*" – **A-W-F-U-L**. Saul had not been here tonight; he was not at Calvary; he did not see *(Christ) bare our sins in His own body on the tree.* By his own admission and as Saul, he did not believe. But he did know the Law of Moses and he did know that this Jesus of Nazareth was *upon the tree* of Crucifixion and, therefore, according to the Law must be *cursed* and, subsequently, so must those who followed and believed in Him.

But, thanks be to God, the Biblical Saul was to become the Biblical Paul. No, he was not there at Calvary and he was absent from Good Friday. But Calvary came to him; Good Friday confronted him on that road to Damascus; Christ, the King, graced him in and with that blinding and converting light.

But that is precisely the core of Christianity: Christ, through Word and water, confronting and converting; then Christ, through either Word alone or Word and Holy Supper, strengthening and growing what He gives: namely – FAITH.

And the “what-and-how” of Saul to Paul, has remained the same to you and me. It is called GRACE: God’s undeserved love to us, undeserving sinners. Or, as our Crucified King, Himself, said: *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.* And so, while Saul would have looked at that Calvary-tree and spelled it **A-W-F-U-L**; converted and graced Paul looks at Calvary’s Tree and spells it **A-W-E F-U-L-L**.

No longer Saul, now Paul, he could look, through his eyes of faith, and seeing that Calvary Tree and the King that hung upon it and Paul would exclaim: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And so it is and, may it please God, ever shall be for us and all 2014 “Pauls.” Personally, I shall forever thank my Lord for what He did for me, to me, on August 30, 1936 via the Holy Ghost and the waters of Baptism, or to quote our Catechism: *He has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts and kept me in the true faith.* And you can say the same thing, I know, and you do.

This evening we stand on the crest of Calvary and with the eyes of faith, we can see Who was throned on the awe full tree – our King! And we know that essentially, the spelling difference between “awful” and “awe full” is the simple letter “e.”

“E” – might I suggest that such stands for “emancipation.” Yes, “emancipation,” like in “free.” Yet such is not my idea, it was, it is, that extra amplification and expansion that Peter, in our text, spoke of when he said: *Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.* There it is, that amplification, that expansion, that “*What does this mean?*” – *That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.* In a word, “emancipation.” But rush to note that this emancipation carries with it twin blessings. We are free from the damning accusations of the Law. Our text: *That we, being dead to sins...* Let others, let Satan, let my own flesh condemn and censure me for what I have done and left undone. My reply: *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

But do not overlook that, according to our text, we are not only emancipated/free from but also emancipated/free for. Our text: *That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.* For me, *dead to sins* took place on August 30, 1936 but *live to righteousness*, has been, should be and, may it please God, will be ever since. And such is true also for you.

Because of our Crucified King’s lesson in spelling we have knowledge of our future days, months and years. Yes, because of His lesson in spelling for us, we know that regardless of tomorrow/next week or next year, He was “throned” for us and that’s awe full and there’s that emancipating “e.” Because there is, we can pray – *with bold confidence* – what we have sung.

Take that hymn-insert and pray with me that last verse:

Lord, should fear and anguish roll darkly o’er my soul, thou, who once wast thus bereft that thine own might ne’er be left, teach me by that bitter cry in the gloom to know thee nigh.

In a word – that’s AWE FULL!

Amen.

AMDG