

## *Invocavit ~ First Sunday in Lent*

Reason doesn't know and understand what this hereditary evil is [Psalm 19:12]. As the Smalcald Articles say, it must be learned and believed from the revelation of Scripture. The Apology briefly summarized this under the following main points:

- a. Because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, hereditary evil is the guilt by which we are all in God's displeasure and are, by nature, children of wrath, as the apostle shows (Romans 5:12–14 [; Ephesians 2:3]).
- b. Second, original sin is a complete absence or lack of the created state of hereditary righteousness in Paradise, or of God's image, according to which man was originally created in truth, holiness, and righteousness. At the same time, original sin is an inability and unfitness for all the things of God. Or, as the Latin words read, "The definition of original sin takes away from the unrenewed nature the gifts, the power, and all activity for beginning and accomplishing anything in spiritual things."
- c. Original sin (in human nature) is not just this entire absence of all good in spiritual, divine things. Original sin is more than the lost image of God in mankind; it is at the same time also a deep, wicked, horrible, fathomless, mysterious, and unspeakable corruption of the entire human nature and all its powers. It is especially a corruption of the soul's highest, chief powers in the understanding, heart, and will. So now, since the fall, a person inherits an inborn wicked disposition and inward impurity of heart, an evil lust and tendency. We all by disposition and nature inherit from Adam a heart, feeling, and thought that are, according to their highest powers and the light of reason, naturally inclined and disposed directly against God and His chief commandments [Matthew 22:36–40]. Yes, they are hostile toward God, especially in divine and spiritual things [Romans 8:7]. For in other respects, regarding natural, outward things that are subject to reason, a person still has power, ability, and to a cer-

tain degree understanding—although very much weakened. All of this, however, has been so infected and contaminated by original sin that it is of no use before God [Romans 8:8]....

The dispute about God's essential righteousness dwelling in us must also be correctly explained. In the elect (who are justified by Christ and reconciled with God), God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (who is the eternal and essential righteousness) dwells by faith. (For all Christians are temples of God [1 Corinthians 3:16–17] the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who also moves them to do right.) Yet this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith St. Paul describes and that he calls God's righteousness for the sake of which we are declared righteous before God. But it comes after the righteousness of faith, which is nothing else than the forgiveness of sins and the gracious adoption of the poor sinner for the sake of Christ's obedience and merit alone.

In our churches it is acknowledged among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession that all our righteousness is to be sought outside the merits, works, virtues, and worthiness of ourselves and of all people. Our righteousness rests alone on Christ the Lord. Therefore, how Christ is called our Righteousness in this matter of justification must be carefully considered. I mean, that our righteousness rests not on one or the other nature in Christ, but on Christ's entire person, who as God and man is our Righteousness in His only, entire, and complete obedience.

Even if Christ had been conceived and born without sin by the Holy Spirit and had fulfilled all righteousness in His human nature alone, and yet had not been true and eternal God, this obedience and suffering of His human nature could not be credited to us for righteousness. Also, if God's Son had not become man, the divine nature alone could not be our righteousness. Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that the entire obedi-

ence of Christ's entire person (which He has offered to the Father for us, even to His most humiliating death on the cross) is credited to us for righteousness. For the human nature alone, without the divine, could not by obedience or suffering make satisfaction to eternal, almighty God for the sins of all the world. However, the divinity alone, without the humanity, could not mediate between God and us....

God's foreknowledge foresees and foreknows what is evil, yet not in the sense that it is God's gracious will that evil should happen. Everything that the perverse, wicked will of the devil and of people wants and desires to try and do, God sees and knows before it happens. His foreknowledge preserves order also in wicked acts or works, since a limit and measure is fixed by God for the evil that God does not will. He limits how far it should go, how long it should last, and when and how He will hinder and punish it. God the Lord rules over all [Psalm 103:19] of this so that it must flow to the glory of the divine name and to the salvation of His elect, and for that reason the godless must be astonished [1 Corinthians 2:7–8].

The beginning and cause of evil is not God's foreknowledge. (For God does not create and do evil, neither does He help or promote it.) The cause of this evil is the wicked, perverse will of the devil and of people, as it is written in Hosea 13:9, "He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against Me, against your helper." Also, "For You are not a God who delights in wickedness" (Psalm 5:4).