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Viewpoints

Viewing life as Christ's cross-scarred hand points out the blessings he's overseeing.

Burned Twice! ~ June 21, 2013

Wildfires can leave people getting burned twice. Be careful it's not you.

[Online Version & Archive](#)

No doubt you heard about June's Black Forest wildfire outside of Colorado Springs. It destroyed 360 homes, making it the state's worst wildfire. Our hearts and prayers go out to the families who got burned by the erratic tsunami of flames that engulfed these homes and took two lives.

But did you hear that some of these poor families got burned a second time? Yes, some lowlifes looted what the fickle wildfire happened to spare. How viciously inhumane!

Why does a looter loot? I'm guessing a looter thinks along these lines: "The insurance company is going to be replacing a whole bunch of stuff that was destroyed, so it's no big deal if I take a few the things that survived."

Whether or not that's exactly how a looter justifies his thievery, we know from scripture how it's second nature for a sinful person to try to justify his sins. The first sinner, Adam, tried to justify his first sin by blaming both God and Eve (Genesis 2:12). And of an expert in the law who began to realize that he had failed to love his neighbor as he himself, we read: "But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:29). It's natural for the human's sinful nature to be so selfish, he or she makes excuses for his or her selfish thoughts and behavior. In fact, any person, when given the right circumstances, can be led by their selfish nature to engage in any kind of wicked act. Speaking about everyone except himself, Jesus declares: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:19). In other words, the same sinful nature of the person who looted homes at the Black Forest wildfire also resides in the sinful nature inside you and me.

The difference between an unbeliever and we who believe in Christ is not that we believers have become more just in our character than an unbeliever. God is not satisfied with people who are more just than a looter-- because a holy God demands perfection! And the truth is, no one on earth (except Christ) can make himself perfect before God: "As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one.; there is no one who does good, not even one'" (Romans 3:10-12).

So the difference between us believers and an unbeliever is this: through faith in Christ we are declared righteous. To say this another way, we believers have not become righteous in

our character, but God has graciously granted us the status of being righteous in his sight, for the sake of Christ Jesus. The Biblical term for this is “justified.” As Paul explains: “We know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16).

We who know that we’re justified through faith in Christ also receive in this faith the power to live a new life that brings joy to Jesus. It’s this joy that acts like a fire-suppression system that can extinguish sinful thoughts before they turn into outward acts, like looting. Sure it’s good that we don’t loot someone’s house, but it’s still a sin if we thought about it. And for this sin and any sinful thought, we need the cleansing blood of Christ.

Don’t fall into Satan’s trap of comparing yourself to the looters in Colorado so that you feel morally superior. This is how you’ll get burned twice—first by your false faith in your own moral superiority, and secondly by the flames of hell that await all the self-righteous.

Instead, rejoice that Jesus died on the cross to mercifully pay for the looter that still resides in our sinful natures, so that God’s joyful energy fills you to pursue thoughts and actions that bring glory to Jesus. “I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1). ☩

To learn more about your justification, check out the [6/16/2013 sermon, “Just As If I’d Never Sinned.”](#)

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Blessings to you and your loved ones, Pastor Mike Nitz

