

How many of you have heard the statement, "At least we're all in the same boat," or something similar? When it's used, is it usually referencing something great or something not so great? Most often, it's a statement that finds its place next to "misery loves company." As we look at our text, which happens to be one of the most life-changing texts for Martin Luther, we will quickly realize that we're all in the same boat, but fortunately, by the time we arrive at the end of our text, it will be a good thing, a great thing.

I. In the mind of God, we're all in the same boat. A. Regarding sin, we're all in the same boat. 1. We're all in because it's the only option. Paul writes, "For all have sinned." All but me, all except a few select people, all except those who live a really good life? Paul doesn't offer any exceptions because there are none. We're all in the same predicament. But we don't like that thought, do we? We're desperate for some kind of exclusion, so what do we do? We start classifying sins. "At least I'm not as bad as that person." Somehow, we think that being less of a sinner will get us off the hook. But, at the end of the day, at the end of every day, we're all still in the same boat.

B. Regarding falling short, we're all in the same boat. 1. We're all in because we've all failed by our own efforts. Once again Paul writes, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." It's clear that "all" applies to falling short just as it does to being sinners. You have fallen short; I have fallen short. If you shot fifty baskets and hit the rim every time, would you ever put one point on the board? If you kicked twenty field goals, but hit the goal post every time, would they ever give you the two points? Truth be told, we have fallen short; we missed the target. We blew it. No matter how you slice it, we're all in the same boat called - you failed.

C. Regarding justification, we're all in the same boat. 1. God's forgiveness is available to all. Finally, we're got some good news, some great news. Now we discover, as Luther did as a monk so many years ago, that forgiveness is available to all without exception. But what if God functioned as a selection committee? What if He chose to forgive some sins, but not others? Would this be good news any more? If God were selective, this news would be no better than falling short. Thankfully, God isn't selective. Forgiveness is available to all. It doesn't matter who, or what, or why, or anything else you can dream up. To every event of your past, God says, "forgiven."

2. Because we're in the same boat, we all obtain His forgiveness by grace alone. We are merely recipients and that's great news! God offers and all we do is hold open our faith bag and watch His blessings pour in. How could it get any better than that? Paul writes in Ephesians, "For by grace you have been saved through faith and this not of yourselves lest anyone should boast." His point? You can't do anything to earn forgiveness. Everything you do is a response to faith and forgiveness, never a means of earning either one. God did the unbelievable for the underserving in a magnificent way and because God did it all, we're all in the grace alone boat.

3. Our forgiveness arrives to us as a free gift. In our text, it simply says, "as a gift." Isn't that clear enough? If it's by grace, it can't be earned and if it can't be

earned, it must be a gift. Paul emphasizes the point in Ephesians, "It is a gift of God, not by works." If gift isn't enough, Paul goes on to say that it's not by works. We're all in the same boat, the boat that says, "You can't do anything. You can't row to shore in the midst of life's storm. You can't jump out of the boat and swim to shore without drowning along the way." As much as we seem to be opposed to God's gifts, it's a gift; it's a free gift. Trust me, you want to be in that boat.

D. Regarding redemption, we're once again in the same boat. 1. Without the Christ and the cross, we'd all be in major trouble. When Jesus took the cross, did He die for a select group, for all those other people who couldn't get their act together? The cross was for everyone because we all desperately needed the cross and the redemption attained for us by that cross. If we break it down into simple terms, we're all in the "thank You Jesus for taking the cross in my place" boat. He could have excluded you, but He didn't. He could have said that it was yours for a price, but He didn't do that either. We're in the "cross for us" boat and that's the right place to be.

2. Because of the cross, we are all beneficiaries. When someone dies, who is named in their will? Select individuals, right, specific people that they deemed worthy to include in their will. But the cross doesn't work that way. Because Jesus took the cross in our place, we, you, me, every person who holds to the faith is named as a beneficiary. Every one of those people is destined to inherit the crown of life. It makes no sense. Jesus goes to the cross and dies for us and then He gives us the most incredible inheritance possible as a result of His work? It may not make sense, but it's true because we're all in.

E. Regarding faith, we're all in. 1. Without faith, everything vanishes. Everything offered in our text, forgiveness, redemption, the crown of life, it's available through faith and faith alone. That faith arrived in your heart via the Holy Spirit. You did nothing to earn it, nothing to be chosen. But here's the unique aspect of faith. You cannot earn it, but you can chose to reject it. And if you reject faith, you reject Christ, the cross, forgiveness, and everything else connected. We're all in the same boat in the sense that we all receive this by faith, but if you step out of that boat, everything vanishes. It's gone. It's history. In the boat, it's all yours forever.

2. Faith is the only means of obtaining all this. This was Luther's great revelation! It wasn't about him or what he did or didn't do or had done or hadn't done. It was all about Christ and what He had done. It was all sitting in front of him, but the only way he could pick it up was through faith. You may think you can earn it, that if you do enough good works or lead a good life, God will reward you with His gifts, but none of that will ever work. Your actions are in response to God's acts, never a way to obtain God's gifts. Remember, we're all in the same boat, the boat that says, "It's available by faith and faith alone!" Thank God we're in the same boat.

3. There's no doubt that we'll continue to hear the statement, "Well, it looks like we're all in the same boat." But the next time you hear those words, think of the other boat, the faith boat and say to yourself, "I'm glad we're all in the same boat!" Amen.