

Paul's clean slate

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If anyone can wax poetic about the power of a clean slate, it's Paul. In his mystical meanderings on the human body's relationship to the body of Christ, he doesn't ground his hope in the things that humans do (or don't do) in response to tradition, social pressure, or threats. He grounds it in the inclusive finality of Jesus Christ himself. Trespasses are no more, even as we pray that they be forgiven. And though ideas abound as to how human flesh should respond to new life in Christ, what really counts is where Christ's flesh has been.

And so it is that that same Jesus invoked by Paul is the one who originates a shameless and vulnerable kind of prayer for his followers to engage. "Your kingdom come" is more than hope for the great by-and-by. To pray with confidence that the reign of God will be "now" changes a disciple's priorities.

Concerns about saving one's self from the wrath of a picky and persnickety God melt into a prayer that others experience mercy in the same or greater measure.

Temptation and trial are swallowed--but in Christ's own flesh, so that ours can be oriented toward the wellbeing of the neighbor, with a fearless voice that only confidence in a clean slate can bring.