

What's in A Name?

What if you were known by the name your enemy gave you?

For the Subula,* this is not a hypothetical question. In the language of their ancestral enemies, their name means 'perched.' Why? Because, for generations, the Subula built their villages high on the slopes of mountains. Scattered across the rises, their small huts looked for all the world like bird nests 'perched' above the valley below.

Today, the Subula have come down from the mountain, living in the plains and valleys like any 'modern' people. But they're still called 'the perched.' Ask one of the Subula's neighbors why, and they'll tell you they were stubborn. Afraid to come down and join the modern world. But ask a Subula speaker, and they might, if they trust you, tell you that their people were once afraid.

Afraid of those who came out of the darkness with torch and sword. Afraid of those who carried off their mothers, sisters, and daughters. Afraid of those who spilled their blood far from the stones of the mountains. Afraid of those whose children mock their children for 'perching' so far away.

And so, in their fear, the Subula fled like birds to the one place they could find sanctuary from their enemies - to the mountains.



The Subula mountains are distinctive. It would be unwise to publish images of them as a visual reference. We have included a landscape from the LBT photo archives as a compromise.

**Subula is a pseudonym for the people group we will partner with.*

Standing Accused

For some of us Americans, the idea of being known by the shameful nickname our oppressors gave us might feel a little foreign; for others, not so much.

But as Christians, we do all know what it means to be known by the name our enemy gives us.

In Revelation 12:10, John records a voice from heaven saying, "The accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down."

This is at once an announcement of good news and a warning for the people of God. Before Christ's victory on the cross over sin, death, and the devil, it would seem that Satan was allowed to stand in the court of heaven, claiming to be the rightful representative of sinful humanity. While there, he correctly accused us of every wicked thing imaginable. But the ascension of Christ - hands and feet still pierced - into the heavenly court revealed Satan's claims and charges for the lies they had become.

Now Christ, the innocent Lamb who bore every shameful accusation we deserved, stands before His righteous Father and names us redeemed. Later, John will write in his gospel account that "[the Father] has given [the Son] authority to execute judgment" (Jn 5:27), and so the Lord of hosts will drive the devil, not us, from heaven.

Good news indeed, and yet, the voice continues. He warns John and us, saying, "Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time." (Rev:12:12)



*'The Ascension of Christ' depicted by a Cameroonian artist.***



*St. Michael casting Satan out of heaven.****

Woe to the Earth

Cast from heaven, Satan can no longer accuse us before the face of God, and so he does the next best thing. He accuses us directly.

You know he does. Each day, Satan comes beside you and calls you every sort of vile name there is: idolater, murderer, pornographer, thief, liar, gossip. He plays upon your insecurities, naming you a loser, unlovable, and hopeless. Unable to convince God to cast you out of heaven, he seeks to sow despair and doubt so that he can drag you down with him into the pit.

Written in Stone

It's easy to believe those accusations, isn't it? After all, they're all based on things we have actually done. And yet, in the upside-down justice of the courtroom of heaven, we are judged not by things we have done but by the things done for us.

In Psalm 11 David, a liar, adulterer, and murderer, tells us "In the LORD I take refuge. How then can you say to me: 'Flee like a bird to your mountain.'"

Accused daily by a furious fallen angel, God's Word is an essential comfort and strong tower for the beleaguered



Remnants of a Subula village on the mountain.



Children peering curiously into the translation center.



Subula leaders discussing the Bible translation project.

Christian. Through it, we can read and hear, again and again, the stories of those who, like us, deserved death but received life. Through it, we can read and hear, again and again, the love, the forgiveness, the promises, and the new name Christ has given us. A name so certain He has "written [it] on [a white] stone." (Rev. 2:17)

Imagine what reading that Word would mean for the Subula. Imagine them listening to the words of their brother David, who tells them, "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth." (Ps. 121:1-2)

God has also given the Subula new names and carved them on their own white stones. Names that reveal their enemies, human and spiritual, to be liars. They need no longer be fearful people 'perched' on the mountain. They need no longer be sinners deserving of death and hell. They are children of almighty God, whose advocate is waiting in heaven to argue their case.

God's Word brings light into dark places, hope into fearful disgraces, and clarity into confusing spaces. God's Word throws out the book of our painful stories and writes our new names into the Book of Life. May we, and the Subula, lift our eyes to the hills for help when Satan accuses us and flee like birds to perch on the rock of Christ.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray that the Subula believers would continue to seek Christ as their true mountain stronghold courageously.
- Pray for our vehicles as they begin to suffer increasing mechanical issues.
- Pray for our spirits as we get closer to the day that we must give our pet dog Fig away.
- Pray for my brother Jeff and sister-in-law Kayla as they welcome their first child, a girl.

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** JESUS MAFA. The Ascension, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48398>.
*** Louterbourg, Philippe-Jacques de, 1740-1812 ; Landseer, John, 1769-1852. The Macklin Bible -- The Angel Binding Satan, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=54038>.