

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity

From the beginning of the world these two proclamations have always been taught alongside each other in God's Church, with a proper distinction. The descendants of the well-respected patriarchs, and the patriarchs themselves, called to mind constantly how in the beginning a person had been created righteous and holy by God. They know that through the fraud of the Serpent, Adam transgressed God's command, became a sinner, and corrupted and cast himself with all his descendants into death and eternal condemnation. They encouraged and comforted themselves again by the preaching about the woman's seed, who would bruise the Serpent's head (Genesis 3:15); Abraham's seed, in whom "all the nations of the earth [will] be blessed" (Genesis 22:18); David's Son, who should "bring back the preserved of Israel" and be "a light for the nations" (Isaiah 49:6; see also Psalm 110:1; Luke 2:32), and who "was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities ... and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

These two doctrines, we believe and confess, should always be diligently taught in God's Church forever, even to the end of the world. They must be taught with the proper distinction of which we have heard: (a) through the preaching of the Law and its threats in the ministry of the New Testament the hearts of impenitent people may be terrified, and (b) they may be brought to a knowledge of their sins and to repentance. This must not be done in such a way that they lose heart and despair in this process. "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24); so the Law points and leads us not from Christ, but to Christ, who "is the end of the law" (Romans 10:4). People must be comforted and strengthened again by the preaching of the Holy Gospel about Christ, our Lord. In other words, to those who believe the Gospel, God forgives all their sins through Christ, adopts them as children for His sake, and out of pure grace—without any merit on their part—justifies and saves them. However, He does not do this in such a way that they may

abuse God's grace and may sin hoping for grace [Romans 6:1]. 26 Paul thoroughly and forcefully shows this in the distinction between the Law and the Gospel (2 Corinthians 3:6–9). ...

For the explanation and final settlement of this disagreement we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that people who truly believe and are truly converted to God, justified Christians, are liberated and made free from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10). Yet they should daily exercise themselves in the Law of the Lord, as it is written, "Blessed is the man ... [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1–2; see also 119:1). The Law is a mirror in which God's will and what pleases Him are exactly portrayed. This mirror should be constantly held up to the believers and be diligently encouraged for them without ceasing.

"The law is not laid down for the just" as the apostle testifies [1 Timothy 1:9], but for the unrighteous. Yet this is not to be understood in a simplistic way, as though the justified are to live without Law. God's Law has been written in their heart [Romans 2:15]. Also a law was given to the first man immediately after his creation [Genesis 2:15–17]: He was to conduct himself according to this law. What St. Paul means is that the curse of the Law cannot burden those who have been reconciled to God through Christ. Nor must the Law confuse the regenerate with its coercion, for they have pleasure in God's Law in the inner man [Romans 7:22]. ...

However, believers are not renewed in this life perfectly or completely. Their sin is covered by Christ's perfect obedience, so that it is not charged against believers for condemnation. Also, the putting to death of the old Adam [Romans 6:6] and the renewal in the spirit of their mind [Ephesians 4:23] is begun through the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the old Adam still clings to them in their nature and all its inward and outward powers. The apostle has written about this:

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. (Romans 7:18)

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (Romans 7:15)

But I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Romans 7:23)

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. (Galatians 5:17)

Because of these fleshly lusts, God's truly believing, elect, and regenerate children need the daily instruction and admonition, warning, and threatening of the Law in this life. But they also need frequent punishments. So they will be roused, the old man driven out of them, and they will follow God's Spirit, as it is written:

It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes. (Psalm 119:71)

But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (Hebrews 12:8)

Dr. Luther has fully explained this at greater length in the Summer Part of the Church Postil, on the Epistle for the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

We must also explain clearly what the Gospel does, produces, and works toward the new obedience of believers. We must also explain the Law's office in this matter, regarding believers' good works.