

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Trinity Sunday, June 12, 2022

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 379, 236:1, 375, 412, 385:4

Lessons: Isaiah 6:1-8, Romans 7:14-25, John 15:1-8.

Sermon Text: Romans 8:1-4.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The apostle Paul begins this chapter with a conclusion: ***“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”***

In the first 7 chapters of Romans he has carefully been laying out the Law of God and has made it very clear that no one – not even Jews, who had had the Law of God given through Moses for centuries – can earn salvation by obeying the law.

As you heard in our Epistle lesson, Paul laments his sinfulness. ***“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.”*** Romans 7:18-19 (NIV) How terrible! He just can't do the good things he wants to do!

And what about us? Do we always do what is good, always do the right thing? Absolutely not.

This would be a cause for despair – except for one thing: ***“there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”***

THROUGH CHRIST JESUS, BELIEVERS ARE SET FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH.

- 1. The law clearly identifies sin and leads to death,**
- 2. But there is hope through Christ Jesus,**
- 3. So that we may lead lives dedicated to Christ.**

Laws do not bring about obedience. Laws make people aware of rules and commands, laws teach about right and wrong, but they do not force anyone to do what is right. Simply having the law – even if it is carved in stone, as in some communities the Ten Commandments are engraved in stone or painted on walls – does not make good people.

As a community, a state, and a nation we need to have laws. Just as God's laws do, civil laws may prevent to some degree terrible outbreaks of sin. However, there have been many mass shootings in the United States in recent months, and many more killings of one or several people by people who disobeyed clear, plain laws that a nation or state had commanded. In those cases laws of the land didn't even serve as a curb, serving to prevent coarse outbreaks of sins. Those who broke those laws apparently weren't even afraid of being punished. When you realize how wicked people are, you must admit that even civil laws do not make better people.

The laws which a community, a state, and a nation make also have the effect of showing people their wickedness. That is the function of law as a mirror. But the attitude of a person who is not a Christian tends to be more like 'Well, I'm pretty good at obeying most of the laws that the government sets up.' Human nature doesn't want to admit sinfulness.

The law itself does not make people good. On the highway outside this church building are speed limit signs. That is posting the law. It is obvious to everyone who can read, and everyone who has passed a driver's

license test has learned that there are certain places that automatically have certain speed limits. But not everyone who drives on that highway obeys even that simple speed limit law.

The bottom line is that law does not make for better citizens. Even the remnants of God's law which was written into the hearts of all people at creation can't and don't make them better people. The law is powerless to make people do what is right.

The Apostle Paul writes about God's laws. God's laws certainly show us our sinfulness, our wickedness. They show that our lives and actions and words are evil and imperfect, and Paul laments: ***"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*** Romans 7:24 (KJV)

You just heard him say in our epistle lesson: ***"So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"*** Romans 7:21-24 (NIV)

Yes, the question is ***"Who will rescue me from this body of death?"*** Breaking God's Law leads to death. End of sentence. End of hope. End of life. Beginning of eternal condemnation in hell.

But (pause here) did you remember the very next verse? ***"Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*** Romans 7:25 (NIV)

After Paul's lamenting and confessing his wickedness – and by extension also confessing the wickedness of all mankind, there is hope.

And then we have the beautiful message of our text: ***"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*** Why? ***"Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."***

What does ***"no condemnation"*** mean? It means that there is no curse, no judgment of conviction, no judgment of hell, and no judgment of eternal damnation.

Scripture is speaking of eternal damnation in hell, as we read in Mark: ***"Whoever does not believe will be condemned."*** Mark 16:16 (NIV) ***"He that believeth not shall be damned."*** Mark 16:16 (KJV)

But the good news is, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is, that there is now no condemnation because Christ Jesus – the Messiah, the Savior – set me free. God calls this gift justification, Instead of the righteous, honest judge handing down a judgment of condemnation, of guilt, God the righteous, honest judge gives a verdict of "not guilty", of "no condemnation", of "innocent" because someone else – Jesus Christ – paid the penalty, suffered the punishment, the condemnation you deserved. ***"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering."***

But there is still the duality, the two natures of the Christian as long as we are on earth. As long as we have breath and life, we will have our sinful flesh. But because we have been born again as children of God, we also have our new man, the ***"new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"*** Ephesians 4:24 (NIV) as Scripture tells us.

Since the Christians with their flesh still serve the law of sin and, because of the weakness of their corrupted flesh, still sin daily and much, they are heaping God's wrath and condemnation upon themselves by their sins which they are daily struggling against.

But Scripture is plain here: ***"there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."***

We have been justified, declared not guilty.

Aren't all of us Christians concerned that our thoughts, words, and lives don't live up to what God demands of us in his law?

But here we are given the assurance that God, who was reconciled to all men in Christ Jesus, looks upon the justified sinners, upon the regenerated, believing Christians, as though they were altogether in the Spirit, as though they had no sinful flesh to hinder them anymore. To those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not guide their entire life according to the flesh, according to their sinful desires, but follow the commands of the Spirit, to these there is no sentence of condemnation.

This is our life of sanctification, using the scriptural narrow sense of the word sanctification, of being eager to live a holy life filled with good works. This happens because, using the scriptural broader sense of the word sanctification, the Holy Spirit has called us out of the unbelieving world to be holy by bringing us to faith in Christ, enlightening us, and keeping us in the faith.

The Law couldn't set us free, but God did set us free by sending his son as a human.

Here Paul is talking about the great work of sanctification, which follows justification.

As a child of God, I live according to the Spirit, the Spirit of God, and as God's beloved child, that is what I want to do, not doing what I – that is, my sinful flesh – want to do, but what God wants me and all men to do. Of course, what he wants us to do is obey his law!

In our lives of sanctification, through the work of the Spirit we have died to sin and become partakers of the resurrection of Christ. That Spirit of God even worked faith in us to believe that God sent his own Son to bear the sin of the whole world

Christ was made the sacrifice for sin – for all sin. Christ was cursed, suffering the results of sin.

Christ satisfied the demands of the law by his perfect obedience, yet he suffered its curse and condemnation. He did this for us so that we might live to him. He has delivered all mankind from the power of sin.

The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death. The present, regenerated state of the Christian, in which we walk, not following the flesh, but following the Spirit, is a proof of the fact that the Spirit has really delivered us from the law of sin and of death. The law of the Spirit of Life is the Holy Spirit, who would guide our entire conduct and lead us to the life which is in Christ, causing us to live in Christ and with Christ. And in doing this for us, the Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death, which wanted to control and direct our life and deliver us into the power of death, to which we were subject by nature. Thus it is no longer sin, but the Holy Spirit who is the controlling factor in the lives of the believers. We are set free from the power of death.

By delivering us from the dominion of sin, Christ has made it possible for us to follow the Law of God, to deny and crucify the flesh and to live according to the Spirit. And the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the life in Christ, has set us free from the bonds, from the dominion and jurisdiction of sin and of death, and now teaches us to walk, and to live and to lead our entire lives in conformity with God's will.

Because God has done all this through Christ, may we always daily crucify our sinful flesh and seek to follow God's precepts. Amen.