

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity, September 20, 2026

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

Hymns: 317, 16:4, 369, 405, 402:5.

Lessons: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Ephesians 5:1-11, Luke 11:14-28.

Sermon Text: Romans 5:18-6:2.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ our Savior, dear friends:

In the Bible God has given us two main doctrines which summarize the entire doctrinal content of the Old and the New Testament. These two doctrines are called the Law and the Gospel. They are fundamentally different from each other. The main distinction is this: The Law shows us our sin and the wrath of God and tells us what God wants us to do and not to do. The Gospel shows us the love of God in Christ our Savior and tells us what God has done and is still doing for us.

The Law of God makes relentless demands of us. It, in effect, says to us: ***“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*** Matt. 5:48. The Gospel, on the other hand, is a lovely, sweet and comforting language. It promises us by the grace of God, salvation without any conditions attached. We like to sum it up in these words of Jesus to Nicodemus: ***“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*** John. 3:16.

Both the Law and the Gospel are the truth of God, and both are necessary for us to hear. Without the Law we would not know we were sinners who needed a Savior; without the Gospel we would not know our Savior and how we have been saved. It is essential that the Law be preached in its full sternness, and the Gospel in its full sweetness.

Today we have the privilege of meditating on a Bible text which gives:

GOD’S MESSAGE TO SINNERS IN LAW AND GOSPEL.

- 1. Through Adam all men received the sentence of condemnation;**
- 2. Through Jesus all men have been declared righteous;**
- 3. As the Law makes sin abound, so the Gospel reveals the superabundance of God’s grace; but,**
- 4. To persist in sin because we are justified by grace is unthinkable.**

There are two main Law statements in our text. The first is: ***“The result of one trespass was condemnation for all men.”*** The other is: ***“Through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners.”*** The ***“one trespass”*** and ***“the disobedience of the one man”*** was the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Sin is the transgression of the Law. John writes: ***“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”*** I John 3:4. God gave Adam and Eve a commandment, a law: ***“You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”*** Gen. 2:17 But Eve listened to Satan’s temptation and did eat of it, and she gave some to her husband, Adam, and he ate it. It is Adam as the one whom God created first, as the head of his wife, who is held responsible for this sin. That’s why our text speaks of the ***“disobedience of the one man.”*** That’s why before our text Paul writes that ***“sin entered the world through one man.”*** v. 12.

This sin of Adam was imputed to all men. Adam’s sin was charged by God as the sin of all men. Through Adam’s disobedience all men are regarded and treated as sinners. We are not to ask: How can this be? We are not to charge the holy God with being unfair. We simply are to accept it as a fact of God’s Holy Word.

Our text says that ***“the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men.”*** That condemnation is death, for ***“the wages of sin is death.”*** Rom. 6:23. So Paul says before our text: ***“Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”*** v. 12. Once Adam fell into sin, his descendants could not be born without sin. Jesus said: ***“Flesh gives birth to flesh.”*** John 3:6. One who is a sinner gives birth to a sinner. So it is that David had to confess: ***“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*** Ps. 51:5. This is what we call original sin, because we have it from our origin, from the time we are conceived. Everybody is thoroughly sinful by nature. At the time of Noah’s flood, when all people on earth except Noah and his family were killed in the flood waters, this is the Lord’s assessment of mankind: ***“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”*** Gen. 6:5.

The sin of man resulted in God’s condemnation. God was angry, angry beyond our imagination. God’s anger affects all mankind. Paul says: ***“Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”*** Eph. 2:3. As the wrath of God was shown at the time of the flood, as it was shown when Israel as a nation and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed, as it is shown today in the terminal disease called AIDS, so it will be shown in an immeasurably greater way after God says to the unbelievers on Judgment Day: ***“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”*** Matt. 25:41. ***“This will happen,”*** Paul writes, ***“when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power....”*** II Thess. 1:7-9.

This is the damning message of God’s Law. How fearful it is! It makes us tremble! Therefore, with great eagerness we turn to the message of the Gospel in our text and learn that through Jesus all men have been declared righteous.

2.

Again we have two main statements of Gospel in our Text. The one is this: ***“The result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.”*** The other: ***“Through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”*** The one man referred to this time is Jesus. He, the eternal Son of God, true God with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, became also a true man so that he could be our Savior from sin.

Jesus’ ***“one act of righteousness”*** was not a single deed of his, but everything that he did for our salvation. It includes keeping the Law for us in our place. He came to do God’s will, and he did it perfectly. He was absolutely holy in all that he did, so that he could ask his bitter enemies: ***“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?”*** and they could not say anything. (John 8:46) Jesus’ ***“one act of righteousness”*** also includes his obedience in suffering God’s full wrath upon sinners in his own body, ***“The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*** Is. 53:6. Jesus suffered and died for all of us, and what he did for us paid for all our sins. His blood, which Peter says is ***“the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect,”*** (I Pet. 1:19) ***“purifies us from every sin.”*** I John 1:7 That’s why God considers us righteous and declares us righteous in his sight.

This righteousness, earned by Jesus, is imputed to all sinners. Just as Adam’s sin was imputed to all men, so Jesus’ righteousness is imputed to all men, This is what Paul says in these words: ***“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.”*** II Cor. 5:19. This is the precious message of the Gospel: Christ’s righteousness is imputed to all sinners. ***“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God,”*** II Cor. 5:21. The beauty of this Gospel is that it is a message that pertains to all people. It speaks of the objective justification of the whole world of sinners. Every person in the world, without exception, is told that God for Jesus’ sake counts no sins against him, but considers him holy and righteous in his sight. The fact that this precious message is received by faith, and that the righteousness of Christ can only be accepted by faith, is something that is taught elsewhere in the Bible, but it is not a part of our text. It is this, that in Christ Jesus we are accounted righteous in God’s sight, that is stressed in our text. That’s the good news that the Lord want us to believe.

We yet want to briefly consider two other truths of our text, one to assure us of the Gospel’s comfort, and the other to exhort us to holiness of living. The first truth is this: As the Law makes sin abound, so the Gospel reveals the superabundance of God’s grace.

Paul writes: ***“The law was added so that the trespass might increase, But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** The written Law of God was added 2,500 years after creation, a long time after Adam’s transgression. The purpose of the written Law given through Moses, was to bring out the sinfulness of man. The written Law showed man the fixed, definite standards of the holy God, and so sin abounded as a result. But, Paul says, ***“grace increased all the more.”*** God’s grace in Christ was superabundant. It was more than sufficient to cover all of man’s sin. So then, as sin had been shown to reign in bringing death upon all men, the grace of God in Christ reigns in superabundance to give eternal life as a result of being justified for Jesus’ sake. This truth is to assure us of our eternal redemption in Christ our Savior.

In response to this marvelous grace of God in Christ, Paul teaches: To persist in sin because we are justified by grace is unthinkable.

Paul asks: ***“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”*** When Martin Luther so zealously taught the Gospel of justification by faith without the so-called good works of man, he was accused of teaching a doctrine that permitted man to live in sin. But that idea is truly horrible and unthinkable. Anyone who has truly accepted Jesus’ work of redemption in faith by the grace of God, surely does not show his appreciation for this by persisting in sinful living! We are not to think this way: I can sin all I want because all my sins are paid for by Jesus’ work of redemption. Rather, we are to think in this way: My Savior did so much for me, gave his very life for my sins. Therefore, I want to show how much I appreciate this by hating and avoiding everything that I know is displeasing to my Lord. Christianity is not a license to do as we please in sinful disobedience to God’s commandments.

It is a state of being dead to sin and alive to God, serving him with a grateful heart. Let this, then, be our prayer:

“Grant that I only Thee may love
And seek those things which are above
Till I behold Thee face to face,
O Light eternal, through Thy grace.” Amen.
(The Lutheran Hymnal 398, v. 4)

Reprinted from a Ministry By Mail sermon for March 6, 1988.