

# This is the Christian Faith

## The Second Table of the Law (Commandments 7-10)

### The Seventh Commandment

God is the owner of everything.

He does not really give His possessions to anyone. He lets people use His things. For His own reasons He permits some people to manage many things. Other people manage few things.

How easy it is to forget this. Even Christians say, “This is my house.” What they mean is: “This is God’s house. He has placed it in my care.”

Because all things belong to God, He cares about what happens to them. He wants people to manage His property wisely. He does not want us to take things He has entrusted to others. That is why He gave the Seventh Commandment about earthly possessions.

### **You shall not steal**

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God  
so that we do not take our neighbor’s money or possessions,  
or get them in any dishonest way,  
but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: God’s People Respect What God Gives to Them and Others

How do we receive our share of God’s possessions? Some we receive as gifts from other people. Some we earn by working. Some we buy with money we have earned. In every case God is the Giver.

✠ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights  
James 1:17a

In His wisdom God decides that some people receive more, others less. People compare what they have with what others have. Then some begin to desire what others have. This leads to stealing.

The evil heart of man has invented many ways of getting for self what God has entrusted to others. Man’s laws have different names for the various ways of stealing. *Robbery* means taking things by force or intimidation. *Burglary* is when a person enters a building or house with the intent to steal something. Bank robbers blasting open safes with dynamite. *Theft* is stealing when others are not looking like shoplifters

taking things from store counters.

Then there is fraud. *Fraud* is committed when theft takes place under some form of deception. Storekeepers may charge too much or sell poor goods under false pretense. Dishonest men get people to sign papers they have not read and then cheat them.

There are so many ways to steal. Car thieves drive off with other people's cars. Some people make careless debts and fail to repay. Others cheat the government by lying when they pay taxes. Some waste time or do poor work for their employer which the Bible calls *laziness*. Others take advantage of people who borrow money by charging too high a rate of interest.

Countless human laws have been written to curb all such forms of dishonesty. God forbids it all when He says, "Do not steal."

- ⊗ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. Ephesians 4:28

Call it what we will, be as clever as we may — even find "legal" ways to steal—God is not deceived by any such trick. As Christians we know that we cannot steal from anyone without stealing from God. All property is really God's.

God's concern about what we do with His possessions does not stop with forbidding stealing. He shows that the Christian faith includes responsibility. This commandment spells out a duty. We are to help our neighbor with earthly possessions.

Is a neighbor hungry or cold? His need is our opportunity to use God's possessions to show His love.

- ⊗ Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16

Is our neighbor's property in danger by fire, flood, or other loss? The Christian feels responsible for coming to his aid.

- ⊗ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? I John 3:17

Jesus wants His followers to be concerned about the needs of others. To help others is to help Him. This includes concern for a neighbor's goods as well as his body.

## THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: God's Will Guides My Attitude Toward My Own and My Neighbor's Goods

Satan whispers lies to me. He tries to convince me that money is the most important thing in the world. If I heed his lies, I will be greedy and selfish. The next step may be some form of stealing.

God's Word speaks to me too. God reminds me that I own nothing. I am to use His gifts according to His will. He owes me nothing, but in mercy He has bound Himself to me. He gave His Son to cleanse me of my sin and make me His child. His love and wisdom grant me what I need.

Some earthly goods I may use for myself. Some I may use as God's representative for others. Some I may use to do God's work. I am a manager, or steward, of God's property.

I believe that God has made me responsible for what He has given others. I am not to envy them. I am not to try to get their possessions for myself. As God's helper I am to help them keep and improve what God has put in their charge.

Of course it is wrong to steal. But furthermore God has given me the privilege of telling others of our salvation through Jesus. How could I ever do this for someone from whom I had stolen? By helping others keep their earthly goods I may win their friendship. Then they may listen when I tell them of the precious gift of God.

### Prayer Thought—

I need to pray for God's grace that I may use my talents and possessions in His service.

I am tempted to greed, envy, and selfishness every day. I admit to God that I am troubled by them.

I ask Him for strength to fight them. Nothing in this world can make me any richer than I am.

I thank God that I am His child and in Christ an heir of all God's riches.

## **The Eighth Commandment**

It is not difficult to find faults in other people.

All human beings are sinful. If we watch any person long enough, we will catch him in sin.

God has not told us to look for faults in other people. He has told His followers to love others in spite of their faults. He loves all people. His love cost Him very much. He gave His Son as a sacrifice to save all people.

Because God sacrificed so much for all people, He is concerned about what happens to them in their daily lives. Among His best earthly gifts to men is a good name. He knows how quickly a good name can be destroyed by wagging tongues. Therefore He has given the Eighth Commandment, that judges our unkind words and thoughts about our neighbor and guides us in the way we should speak about him.

**You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.**

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God so that  
we do not tell lies about our neighbor,  
betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation,  
but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

**THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: God's People Protect the Neighbor's Good Name**

Because Christians fear and love God, they see their fellowmen as God sees them. God forbids bearing false witness because it hurts others.

It is not loving God to betray another person. To *betray* means to tell secret things about someone else. It is a great temptation to reveal secrets. It makes some people feel important to tell about other people's sins. How quickly such secrets leak out and pass from person to person. The Lord tells us what to do when we know about another person's faults:

- ⊗ If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. Matthew 18:15a

As for telling others, Scripture says:

- ⊗ A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret. Proverbs 11:13

It is not loving God to *slander* or *lie* about our neighbor. When you tell lies about someone or say things about a person that are meant to make them look bad you are guilty of slandering them. A witness in court is under oath. If he lies about someone, he may be punished for *perjury*. If someone deliberately prints lies about another person in a book or newspaper, he is guilty of *libel* and deserves to be punished. There are few laws of man to punish liars.

However, God forbids all kinds of lying. People lie about others for various reasons. Sometimes they want to make the other person appear evil. What they may mean is, "Look how much better I am." Sometimes they try to steal business or friends by lying about others.

Sometimes they may even think they are telling the truth. They pass on an evil story without checking it. Later they may be sorry that they were led to spread a lie.

One thing we may be sure of is that love is not the source of lies. St. Paul reminds us of our duty to love our fellowmen when he writes:

- ✘ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. Ephesians 4:25

Loving God leads us to defending our neighbor. It is not easy to speak up for someone. It is more popular to join in condemning an absent person. But it is cowardly to talk about someone behind his back. The power of Christ's love gives courage. True bravery means to defend those who cannot defend themselves. This is especially true when they are being attacked with lies and evil words.

Loving God leads us to speak well of our neighbor. How good it is to receive a compliment! Everyone hungers to have good things said about him. The person with a loving heart looks for good things in others. Then

he talks about the good things he sees. He is not a miser with compliments.

Loving God leads us to explain our neighbor's actions in the kindest light. Almost any action can be explained in several ways. Some people regularly choose the least charitable explanation. A man's picture may appear in a newspaper because he gave money to a good cause. Some will hint that he just wanted to get his picture in the paper. Other will suggest that he had a guilty conscience. Some will choose the kindest explanation. They will note that he is a generous man.

In speaking about others, as we often do, let us show the love of God in our hearts.

- ✘ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

#### THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: I Show My Love of God in Speaking Well of My Neighbor

I see how I have sinned against this commandment. My ears have itched to hear bad things about others. I have readily passed on gossip. I have been quick to judge others and excuse myself.

I cannot even know all my sins against this commandment. Was my teacher ill-tempered? Or was she really ill? Was that person a snob, as I said? Or was he shy and afraid? Did the grocer try to cheat me? Or did he make an honest mistake? Did my friend really cheat on an examination? Or did my envy of his high mark make me imagine that he did?

My Savior spoke well even of those who nailed Him to the cross. His great love is available also for me. His love for me is my only hope for forgiveness. His great love for me will help me lead the life of Christian love—even with my tongue.

## Prayer Thought-

Sins against this commandment start in my heart. My prayer may ask God for cleansing. What makes me speak evil of others? Is it pride or envy or cowardice? God will hear my prayer for cleansing.

## The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

The last two commandments are different from the others.

In the first eight commandments God tells us what we are to do or not do. At first we may think God now adds to the list. Closer study shows a difference.

The last two commandments lead us to ask: "What kind of person does God want each of us to be?"

Every stream has a source. The sinful actions of men are like a stream. Where do they all begin?

Jesus says that a person who lives without fear and love of God has a wicked heart. From his wicked heart flow wicked deeds.

- ✘ For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. Matthew 15:19

People think they can please God by doing more good things than bad things. It surprises them that God considers it sinful to think wrong things. Beyond this, it is sinful even to be the kind of person who can think or do wrong. All hope of pleasing God by ourselves is destroyed. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments drive us to God's mercy.

### **You shall not covet your neighbor's house.**

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

### **You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.**

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

## THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: Only God Can Cleanse Man's Heart

To “covet” here means to have in one's heart a desire to have and to get something not intended for us or forbidden to us or only available at the expense of another person. Coveting is like electricity. You can't see it. You can only see what it does. A man may sit perfectly still and yet be coveting. Unless God roots out or displaces the coveting, the man will eventually do something evil.

Coveting begins with desiring. A man may notice that his neighbor has a fine house or car. This may lead to envy. The man becomes unhappy with his own things.

Next, he may scheme to take the neighbor's things by trickery. Perhaps he can persuade his neighbor to gamble and then cheat him.

He may pretend to have a right to his neighbor's goods. He may discover a way to claim his neighbor's goods legally. Sometimes a person pretends to have been badly hurt in an accident. If he brings a lawsuit and convinces the jury, the court may rule that the person who supposedly injured him must pay him a large sum of money.

He may coax or tempt a neighbor's wife or workers away from him. He may convince the wife that she will be happier if she leaves her husband for him. He may entice workers by offering higher wages than his neighbor can afford to pay.

The Bible has many examples of the results of coveting. Jezebel wanted Naboth's vineyard for her husband. She schemed to have Naboth accused of cursing the king and God. The elders and nobles obeyed her in the scheme, and so the people stoned Naboth to death. King Ahab took the vineyard.

History tells of the results of coveting. Because of it men have started wars. They have robbed and cheated and murdered. They have committed adultery.

Covetousness hints at satisfaction but produces only more greed, more sin, more unhappiness. St. Paul describes its course:

- ⊗ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. I Timothy 6:8-9

When it is left to itself, this is the way of the human heart. Men excuse themselves for it. They say: “I just want what's coming to me.”

God faces men the other way. He commands that we subdue selfish desires and help our neighbor keep what is his. Instead of coaxing our neighbor's loved ones away, we are to encourage them to remain loyal.

If sins come from the heart, how can we help ourselves? Can we change what we are? We know what we should be like:

✠ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

Only God can change us. As we are baptized and as we hear and trust God's promises in Christ, God changes us.

✠ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17

✠ I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

### THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: God's Grace Must Cleanse My Heart

In these commandments a light is flashed onto my heart. I see my true condition.

I would be foolish to try to rid my house of flies with all the windows open. So foolish would I be to try to keep from sin while my heart is not changed.

To keep any of the commandments, I must fear and love God. This is not in my heart by nature.

Alone I cannot do God's will. God's Spirit within me works to purify my heart. By Him I can love Him, obey Him, and serve my neighbor. This is my faith. By this faith I live.

#### Prayer Thought—

By nature I do not like to hear how wicked my heart is. I pray that God will help me to see myself honestly. I praise God for His mercy and forgiveness in Christ.

### The Conclusion of the Commandments

Our God is a jealous God.

This may seem to be a strange thing to say, yet God uses the word jealous to describe Himself.

A man may be jealous of his wife in the sense that because she belongs to him, he does not want her to give her love to any other man.

In a similar way God wants His people to belong to Him alone. He watches lest they give to someone else the devotion that belongs to Him alone.



God is therefore very serious about the commandments. This is seen in the Close of the Commandments.

*What does God say about all these commandments?*

He says: “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments. [Exodus 20:5-6]

*What does this mean?*

God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: God’s Grace Alone Can Rescue Men from Sin

We may say that God “invented” human beings. He created the first man and woman He gave them the ability to have children. They are the original parents of the whole human race.

The manufacturer of a machine or appliance includes with his product a booklet of instructions to the user. Often one reads: “The manufacturer will not be responsible if the machine is not used properly.”

The commandments are God’s instructions how human beings are to live. When instructions are not followed, trouble results. God never gives up His ownership of a human being. He is not like a manufacturer who makes a product, sells it, and forgets it. God is angry and sad when any human being lives contrary to His will. He is deeply concerned.

The attempt of a human being to live contrary to God’s will is sin. The apostle John gives a clear definition of sin:

⌘ Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

I John 3:4

Sin began when Satan rebelled against God. Created as a holy angel, he disobeyed God.

Very early in the history of the human race, Satan tempted the first parents of mankind to disobey God. Yielding to that temptation was man’s first sin. One man sinned. By that act he became a sinner, and the children born to him were also sinners.

Every human being since that time has been sinful by birth. Each person inherits a sinful nature. He is sinful in his origin. We say that he has *original sin*. St. Paul refers to this source of sinfulness:

- ⌘ Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned Romans 5:12

*Original sin* is the state of rebellion we are born in. Because all people are born sinners, already early in life we begin to break God's laws. We are born with a tendency to live contrary to God's will. By birth we do not naturally fear and love God. We are enemies of God. We are not able to please God or even want to please Him. We are born guilty in God's sight. We lean toward evil.

Scriptures paint this sad picture of man without God:

- ⌘ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:7-8

Such an infection breaks out on the surface. *Actual sins* of all kinds grow from sinful hearts. Some of our actual sins are when we do the things do that God forbids. This are called *sins of commission* - we commit sin the way a killer commits murder. Other actual sins are *sins of omission* - when we neglect to do what God commands. They think evil. They speak evil. They do evil.

God does not ignore human sin. God punishes sin. Sometimes He acts swiftly. Sometimes He patiently delays. Sometimes other people are punished along with the sinner. The children of a drunkard may go hungry because of his sin.

Worse than any bodily penalties of sin are the spiritual costs. By his sin man loses touch with God. To break God's law is as much as to say, "I don't need you, God."

Unless something changes the picture, sin leads to eternal death. Paul is blunt about this.

- ⌘ The wages of sin is death. Romans 6:23a

No man by his own ability can change the harsh facts of sin. He is born sinful. He commits sins. He makes himself an enemy of God. He is doomed to eternal death.

Our jealous God does not want men to sin. In spite of His hatred of sin He still loves and wants the sinner. God's love can do what man cannot do.

God has prepared a way by which He can, punish sin and save the sinner. He gave His only Son as man's sin-bearer. Jesus bore the curse of man's sin. One who accepts Jesus as His Savior escapes God's wrath. He can be God's own child. He can live as God's child in time and in eternity.

- ⌘ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:17

## THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: I am a Sinner and Need a Savior

In my own life I can see sin at work. Alone, I am helpless against this dread disease. I was born with the stain of sin. I have broken God's laws. I deserve God's wrath. Only in Jesus is there hope for me. He bore also my sins. He died for me. By His grace I am released and may live for Him.

Prayer Thought—

In prayer I admit my sins and my sinfulness. I actually name my sins before God. Then I plead for forgiveness.

Finally I speak my gratitude that I am a child of God for Jesus' sake.

### **Gladly Do What He Commands**

Many people think God wants to take all the fun out of life.

Some decide that they don't want to miss any fun. They break the commandments and do as they please.

Others decide to try to keep the commandments. They feel that they must be miserable in this life. Then God will reward them for their misery by making them joyful in heaven.

Both classes are wrong. Sin does not lead to happiness. It only seems to. It coaxes people by offering pleasure. "If you steal, you can buy things without having to work for them," it says. Or sin says, "You will feel better if you hurt the person who hurts you." However, sin leads people to sorrow. It makes slaves of them so that they can't stop sinning even when it no longer seems to be fun.

The person who thinks that obeying God will make him miserable in this life is mistaken.

Our God is a jealous God. He punishes sin. Our God is also a merciful God. He proves this by "showing steadfast love unto thousands of those who love Him and keep His commandments." He proves it by promising "grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments."

God wants His people to live joyfully. He makes them able to live according to His will. He frees them from the power of sin. He offers a new kind of life which begins in this world and goes on forever.

## THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: The Christian Life Is One of Glad Obedience

Christians do not try to bargain with God. They know that they cannot hope to keep His law perfectly. The commandments are strict. Human beings are born sinful. Seeing his own failure, David could only cry:

⌘ Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you. Psalm 143:2

David and God's people of all ages have simply thrown themselves on God's mercy. Mercy (grace) is God's pity for people caught in their sins. God's people do not say to Him, "See how good I am!" They say, "Don't even begin to judge me. You will find too many sins."

God does not overlook sin. He is a jealous God. His judgment of the man who sins never changes. He says:

✘ The one who sins is the one who will die. Ezekiel 18:4b

Christians know a wonderful secret about God. It is a secret they share with all who will listen. God makes it possible for men to escape the curse of sin. Breaking God's law brings a curse, but -

✘ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, Galatians 3:13a

What is the result if a man believes in Jesus as his Savior? There are several results. God forgives his sins. He doesn't count them against the man. The man does not have to suffer eternal punishment for them. He becomes a child of God. He will live with God forever.

He is free also to live with God in this life. He is free to serve God. He finds joy in keeping the commandments because he loves God. He is no longer afraid of God. Pleasing God is no longer a burden; it is a delight.

Trying to keep God's commandments to earn God's rewards makes them a heavy burden. God doesn't want the commandments to be a burden. Christians see how God has loved them in giving them a Savior. His love for them makes them love Him. A Christian is free and happy because he may keep the commandments as a loving child—not as a slave. As God's child he knows that God gives him what he can never earn. St. John's words make sense in the light of this explanation:

✘ In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome  
I John 5:3

#### THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: I May Be Free and Joyful as a Child of God

I am God's child. I do not deserve to be. God's mercy in Christ has made me His child. As a baptized Christian, I have been adopted by God. Everything Christ has earned by His suffering and death is mine.

The sinful world tries to make me think that as a Christian I am missing good things. God assures me that the life of Christian godliness is a life of freedom and joy. I believe God when He says:

⌘ Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. Isaiah 3:10

I believe God when He tells me that

⌘ For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. I Timothy 4:8

As a child of God I have answers that others do not have. I know God made me. I know I will live with Him after death. I know that my life belongs to Him. I know that my purpose in life is to serve Him and my fellowman.

Worship is not boring. It is my privilege to speak to my God and hear Him speak to me.

I see other people as God sees them. They are sinful, yet God loves them. Jesus died for them. I am to love them even when they sin.

I have God's strength when trouble and pain come. He will never leave me. He controls trouble and pain. He is my Good Shepherd.

I trust my God. I know He loves me. He frees me from fear and selfishness and pride. Even when I fail, His love forgives me and picks me up.

God's way for me to live is the best way.

Prayer Thought-

I pray for the joy of being a Christian. First I must ask God to forgive me when I forget to be joyful in living for Him.

I need His protection against the devil's lies. I ask Him to remind me of His blessings. I ask for the gift of being thankful.

## **Law and Gospel**

What does the cross mean to you? Do you think it is a pretty ornament on a necklace or your coat lapel? Do you like seeing it in your church building? The cross means so much more than this.

Someone said, "The cross is the eternal sign of how far God will go to restore a broken fellowship." The cross is a precious symbol to believing Christians, for it is the evidence of God's steadfast love for sinners. But the cross also shows God in His justice and righteousness as He condemns sin.

The whole message of the Bible is summed up in two teachings: the Law, which condemns sinners because they fail to keep God's will, and the Gospel, which tells of God's work in Christ to forgive all sin. No man can know God without these two teachings.

## THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: God Reveals Himself to Men Through Law and Gospel

Both the Law and the Gospel are the Word of God. God speaks in both. The one depends upon the other. Both Law and Gospel are to be found in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

Every time God faces man as the righteous and almighty God, this is Law. He says:

⌘ “You shall have no other gods before Me.... I the Lord your God am a jealous God.” Exodus 20:3-5

Because He is God, He has the right to demand obedience from all men. Because He is just and righteous, He has the right to punish all who disobey Him. God says:

⌘ Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. Leviticus 19:2

Jesus repeats these demands of God in the words,

⌘ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48

Every human being knows something about God's law. He knows something about power and authority. He knows something about punishment for wrong. Every human being has a conscience. Conscience is the individual's sense of right and wrong. It needs the instruction of God's Word. St. Paul writes:

⌘ Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them. Romans 2:14-15

The Law shows man his helplessness before God's demands for righteousness. It condemns and kills men in that it shows men their unrighteousness. It draws the line of separation between the holy God and sinful man

The Gospel is the Word of God which supersedes the Law. It is God's final and most important Word. The Gospel is the good news that God in Christ Jesus reaches down to sinful man. God in Christ meets all the claims and demands of the Law in man's place. The Gospel proclaims the fact that God in Jesus Christ crosses the line of separation between Himself and sinful man.

God gave His only-begotten Son to the world to accomplish this great deed. Jesus is God's living Word. St. Paul describes this in the words,

✘ God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:19-21

No man is born with the Gospel inside him, as he has the Law written in his heart. Someone has to proclaim this news to him God started the Gospel in the garden of Eden. The Gospel is God working in Jesus Christ to reconcile sinners. The Gospel is God working in the Holy Spirit. God is at work when we tell this Gospel to each other.

The Gospel is not only God's invitation to forgiveness, it is also the power of God which draws sinners to Himself. The Gospel is in Holy Baptism, in which God makes a sinner His own child.

#### THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: God Reveals Himself to Me in the Law and Gospel

God judges me every day. Daily I am faced with my weakness and sin. Every day finds me thinking that I can get even with God by doing something good by myself. I am ashamed how often I love myself or something else more than God.

God's mercies are new to me daily. God is faithful to His promises. His Word is sure. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus God forgives me all my sins. He makes me a new person when His Holy Spirit lives in me. Now I can do works which please Him. He gives me that power.

In my baptism God made me His child. Every day I confess my sin to Him Every day He forgives me. Every day He gives me power to live for Him

#### Prayer Thought-

I confess my sin to God.

I thank God for His everlasting love and mercy to me. I thank Him for making me His child.

I pray for His Spirit in my life to make me also a good ambassador of His Gospel.

## Understanding Law and Gospel

The revelation of God contains two main doctrines: the Law and the Gospel. Both are the Word of God. But we must keep these doctrines separate from each other; they must not be mixed.

A chemist can tell us how two helpful substances are turned into poison when they are mixed. This is what could happen when Law and Gospel are mixed.

Dr. C. F. W. Walther, first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, illustrated this by colors. When you mix yellow with blue, it is no longer yellow or blue but green. When we mix Law and Gospel, we get a third thing that is neither Law nor Gospel.

We can understand a clear definition of Law and a clear definition of Gospel. But to put Law and Gospel into practice in life is difficult. Only God's Holy Spirit can teach us how to keep Law and Gospel separate as we proclaim them both.

THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: Each Christian Must Understand the Law and the Gospel Correctly

In the process of becoming followers of God, sinners need the Law. To be a Christian means to trust in Jesus as Savior. That sounds very simple. But because all men are sinful, it is not simple at all.

Two things keep men from believing in Jesus as their Savior. First, they may not admit that anything needs to be done to make them acceptable to God. Second, if anything needs to be done, they feel that they can do it themselves. They do not understand that only a perfect life satisfies God. The Gospel is not for people who do not yet feel their sin. They will not rejoice at having a Savior.

The Law brands all men as sinners. It reveals God's anger at sin.

- ⌘ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Romans 1:18a

The Law must make them aware of their need. This it does very clearly.

- ⌘ There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Romans 3:10-12

Only the sinner who feels the lash of the Law is ready for the Gospel. Martin Luther compared a sinner's heart to a field. It must first be plowed by the Law. Then the seed of the Gospel will have a place in which to grow.



To become followers of God, sinners need the Gospel. A man may see his sin and be frightened. He is not a Christian until he also turns to Jesus as His only Savior. As he hears the Gospel, the Holy Spirit invites him to believe. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for him to believe promises like this one:

✘ “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Isaiah 43:25

Both Law and Gospel work to make followers of God. The Law does not make believers. It only strikes hard to drive people to feel their own helplessness, and in the Gospel they turn to Jesus Christ as their only Savior.

Even after a person is a believer he needs the Law and Gospel. A believer still sins. Sin keeps edging into his life. He is tempted on every side.

Every day the Christian needs the Law. His sinful nature needs to be shown up every day. Otherwise he begins again to trust his own goodness. He needs to be driven back to Christ again and again.

Every day the Christian needs the Gospel. The good news of God’s love and forgiveness is a comfort to him. Many forces pick at the Christian. They try to make him doubt God’s love. Every day the repentant Christian needs to be reassured that-

✘ “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” 1 Peter 2:24

### THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: I Need Law and Gospel Daily in My Life

In the Law God shows me my sins. He condemns me for trying to take pride in what I can do. I can never find salvation in the Law. The Law shows me how helpless I am before God. I need this message every day.

In the Gospel God invites me to be His child. He shows me all that He has done in Jesus Christ to forgive me all my sins. He draws me to Him in this very invitation. I need this message every day.

I know that only God’s Holy Spirit can teach me how to keep Law and Gospel separate. I need to know that a proud sinner must hear the Law. But a repentant sinner needs the Gospel.

### Prayer Thought--

I confess all my sins, especially the sins of pride. I ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit so that I may proclaim Law and Gospel rightly. I praise God for His salvation.