

What was impossible to the law, was done by God

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1 Scripture alone! Sola scriptura

The source of all theological understanding and all doctrine in church is only God's word. "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Based on the foundation of God's word the believer gains understanding which human reason and feelings can never obtain and even struggles against it. Therefore, the Apostle says: "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The Lord Himself binds His Church to His Word. "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32). These words are not only the exact words of Christ, they are also the words of His Apostles and Evangelists ("He who hears you hears Me" – Luke 10:16) and the words of Prophets and holy writers of the Old Covenant ("All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" – 2 Timothy 3:16; "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" 2 Peter 1:21).

For "This (Christ) is the true God¹, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20). Therefore, "His Word" that we are supposed to continue in, is the Word of the complete Holy Scripture. "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law² from his mouth; for he is the messenger³ of the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 2:7). For this reason God requires the following of a pastor: "Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." (Titus 1:9). By the word of the Holy Scripture God teaches Christianity. No Council, no synod, no Church Father, no church leadership is permitted to teach or require anything – if God's Word does not teach so to do.

A doctrine is only 'doctrine of the Holy Scriptures' if it is based on the explicit written word ... 'Believing' is not a seeing, feeling, comprehending or something, but 'believing' means, without, even against all seeing, feeling or understanding, hold and accept something because God's word says it.

Faith has its foundation and sufficient reason in the Word of God. Because God spoke, that's why I believe it, says the Christian, who believes. That, and only that, is faith ...

This is probably to be stated: In theology no sentence is believed - the word taken in the sense in which we speak at all of articles of faith - which is not really revealed in a word of God.

No matter how much a doctrine or a part of a doctrine may please upon our natural feeling, no matter how probable it may seem to us.

Someone may think he has reached to a certain proposition through his happy method or through his sharp reflection or through his deep meditation:

Lacks God's clear word for it, then he does not believe it.

What he may believe is human opinion, delusion, imagination. "Who does not have clear words of the Scriptures," Luther says, "must have his thoughts; who has'nt lime, builds with dirt."

1 Gleichsetzung in den Sprüchen Joel 2,32 "wer den Namen des HErrn anrufen wird, soll errettet werden" und Röm. 10,13 hier auf Jesus bezogen: der HErr

2 das ist die Weisung aus Gottes Wort: a) Erkenntnis der Sünde und b) Christus als den Helfer von Sünden

3 göttlicher Bote, dass er nichts als das reine Gotteswort predige

No method, no keen reflection, no meditation can replace the lacking Word of God and give faith what his foot can rest upon. ⁴

This is especially true concerning "law and Gospel." We learn to properly handle both parts when we stick to God's Word. The apostle writes to Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15) namely, the law and Gospel. **God wants us to use and divide His Word correctly.**

The difficulty is clearly recognizable when we consider how **seemingly** contradictory statements appear in the Holy Scripture. One referring to God's law says, "Do this and you will live." (Luke 10:28) and the other statement: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Galatians 3:10) and the apostle Paul concludes: "And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death." (Romans 7:10)

In order to solve this apparent contradiction, it is necessary to consider this issue not according to human reason but according to Holy Scripture.

2 What is meant by "law"?

Outwardly the Holy Scripture consists of two parts. The Old and the New Testament. But also, each of these two books consists of two parts, law and gospel. We understand the law as the part of divine doctrine where God tells us what we human beings are supposed to do and not to do, and the Gospel proclaims what God did for us through Christ and what He gives us through Him.

2.1 Three kinds of laws

Please note that concerning the three kinds of laws under the Old Covenant, they are: The **moral law**, which is the declaration of what God requires of man; the **ceremonial or ritual law**, which God used to portray the salvation to come in Christ to the Old Testament people and the **civil law** by which order and the restraint of sin was accomplished in the nation or commonwealth of Israel.

The laws of the state were only valid for Israel, the ceremonial law has finished when Christ became man. It had a revealing and symbolic character – just like the sacrifices were a hint to Christ's perfect sacrifice. It was fulfilled for us through Christ's obedience to the law: "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." (Colossians 2:16-17).

Whoever wants to obey the ceremonial law even in just one point, such a person falls away from saving faith and makes a fatal decision: "Once again I testify to anyone who is circumcised that he is guilty of doing the whole law. You have lost Christ, that you will do justice to by the law, and have fallen out of grace "(Gal 5: 4f.).

⁴ Pieper, Franz O., Wider die neuere Fälschung des lutherischen Schriftprinzips., Lehre und Wehre, Volume 30, No. 10; October 1884; Seite 329 ff.

2.2 One kind of law remains valid and requires our special attention.

Though the **civil law** and the **ceremonial laws** of the ancient people of God have been fulfilled for us, the moral law that God had given through Moses to the Old Testament people Israel, it remains important to us. The Holy Spirit uses the law in many places in the New Testament.

3 "What was impossible for the law ..."

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." (Gal 2:16)

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified..." (Acts 13: 38f.)
The Word of God clearly states that by trying to fulfil the law, man cannot obtain the righteousness that is valid before God (Romans 3: 23-26) because we know "that a person is not justified by works of the law" (Gal 2:16).

It is completely impossible to fulfil the law by our own ability and strength. If God asks for love toward Him, who dares to claim that he can awaken in himself by his natural powers and capabilities to love for God? The Apostle teaches that it is not even possible for the divine law to render harmless the sins and their consequences. The reason for this is not a weakness of the law, but the weakness of our flesh. Although we can fulfil divine law (in an outward sense), it is not in accordance with the will of the Giver of the Law. For God not only demands external fulfilment, but love. He demands the fulfilment of the law in and through love.
This is completely impossible for sinful man! It is made possible for him when first God has acted on him through grace, when he is born again and is in the state of grace.⁵

3.1 Luther's translation

"Now there is nothing damnable about those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit that gives life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and death. For what was impossible for the law (because it was weakened by the flesh), God did, and sent his Son in the form of the sinful flesh, and condemned the sin in the flesh by sin, so that the righteousness required by the law may be fulfilled in us which we now do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8: 1-4)

Here I stay with Luther's translation, although no other translation known to me says the same way. Luther quotes the passage Romans 8: 3 in several other places⁶, and always holds fast to the words: "and condemned the sin in the flesh by sin" - *De peccato damnavit peccatum*. "He condemned sin with sin, chased death away with death, overruled law with law. How? He became a sinner on the cross ... suffering judgment and punishment that a sinner should suffer. Although he is innocent, he

⁵ Luther, Kommentar zum Römerbrief (Kap. 8,1ff.), Zusammenfassung eines Abschnittes

⁶ W² IX, 211; 216; 1815 / W² XI, 1191; 2237 / W² XVIII, 1131

is like a sinner ... to help us, who are truly sinners, with the deadly poison and condemned sin on the cross. "7

Scripture often uses the word "law" when referring to the gospel, as in (Romans 3:28, 8,2). "This corresponds to other passages in Holy Scripture. In Luther's German translation we read: "Death, I want to be your poison." Luther means to say, "God kills death with POISON! Hell, I want to be your pestilence!" (Hosea 13:14); arrested the prison (Ps. 68:19) or 'Christ's death against our death' (Rom 6:3-4) and again 'law' against 'law' (Gal 2:19) and thus describes the redemption through Christ from sin, wrath and damnation.

Luther says: This is amazing language and unheard-of speech which human reason simply cannot understand. It is spoken briefly but very emphatically. Paul seems to be speaking from a fervent and ardent spirit, with great zeal, as though he were indignant. It is as though he were saying: "Why do you boast so much about the Law, about which I do not want to know anything? Why do you din this into me so often? But if there must be a Law, I have a Law of my own." As though he were speaking by the indignation of the Holy Spirit, he calls grace itself "Law." He stamps the content of grace with a new name, as an expression of contempt for the Law of Moses and for the false apostles, who claimed that it was necessary for justification. Thus he opposes the Law to the Law. This is most delicious language. In Scripture, especially in Paul, Law is often opposed to Law, sin to sin, death to death, captivity to captivity, the devil to the devil, hell to hell, altar to altar, lamb to lamb, Passover to Passover.

*Rom. 8:3: "For sin He condemned sin"; Ps. 68:18 and Eph. 4:8: "He led captivity captive"; Hos. 14:14: "O death, I will be your death. O hell, I will be your destruction." Thus he says here that through the Law he has died to the Law. It is as though he were saying: "The Law of Moses accuses and damns me. But against that accusing and damning Law I have another Law, which is grace and freedom. This Law accuses the accusing Law and damns the damning Law." Thus death killed death, but this death which kills death is life itself. But it is called the death of death, by an exuberant indignation of the spirit against death. So also righteousness takes the name "sin," because it damns sin; and this damning sin is true righteousness.*⁸

God became man in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19) and spoke the sentence of judgement to sin and its corrupting power "**by sin.**" How has God taken away sin through sin and declared it powerless for all who are in Christ? The answer is Paul: "[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). God made Christ sin. "**The LORD casteth all our sins upon HIM**" (Is 53: 6). Thus, God not only redeemed us from our sins and guilt by the One whom our sins were laid upon (and in that sense He is called "sin"), but also removed its destructive power. Elsewhere, Christ is called "a curse" for bearing and eliminating the accusatory curse of God's holy and divine law, "**Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.**" (Gal. 3:13).

So, there are good arguments for Luther's translation⁹. Therefore, understand *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* as Atonement (*θυσία*)¹⁰. Luther refers this directly to Christ, who has been made "to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21).

7 W² XI, 1191 (71)

8 W² IX, 277f.

9 καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί Luther fasst "Sünde" in der Weise, wie Bauer angibt, vgl. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum NT, zu *περὶ* hat in Verbindung mit ἁμαρτία (*περὶ ἁμαρτίας*) den Sinn von *Fortschaffung, zur Sühnung*, Hinweis auf Num. 8,8 und Röm. 8,3

10 LXX 3.Mose 4,3: τῷ κυρίῳ περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας = dem HErrn zum Sündopfer, vgl. Hebr. 10,6,8, vgl. Ps. 40,7 LXX Hebr. 10,6,8 ὄλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ εὐδόκησας = Brandopfer und Sündopfer gefallen dir nicht.

3.2 "What was impossible for the law" - What the law cannot do

God's Word teaches that man is spiritually dead through his inherited sin through Adam: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2: 1, 5). He can not bring himself to life so much, that means to turn to God, as the dead youth at Nain was able to help himself from death. As Christ shouted to this dead young man by his word, "Young man, I say to you, arise." The Saviour in the Gospel calls to each sinner his spiritually living word: "Your sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:14, 48).

Thus, through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit awakens the spiritually dead man to life in God, leads him through the trials of the Valley of Wailing to eternal bliss through faith in Christ. That is impossible for the law! The law cannot break the power of sin over man and does not fulfil the righteousness of God demanded by God. Thus, it is impossible for the law to avert the damnation judgment. But that is exactly what God did. He opposed the law that brings death and condemnation to man, a new 'law': "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2).

This is the Gospel, the Good News of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake. Therefore, the Apostle writes: "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law." (Gal. 3:21). So, the law can never bring life, it **cannot** bring a sinner closer to God no matter how hard he tries!

3.3 The reason for this is because it was weakened by the flesh.

"So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin." (Romans 7: 12ff.)

The law cannot bring even the most unbelieving man to God, nor can it improve the Christ-believing man – if he expects to improve himself by his own effort through the law. Paul says of himself (through the Spirit of God, which is true of all Christians): *"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."* (Romans 7: 15-23).

He does not speak here of the time before his conversion, for he **is** not **speaking** in the past tense, but describes his presence.

The sinful nature of man hinders the law. "[It was that] the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death." (Romans 7:10, cf Leviticus 18: 5). In itself, the law is powerful because it is God's Word – but not in the way that it can make a sinner alive, ready to do good and free from his burden, from guilt and punishment. It does not show the patient any remedy for the poison of sin. Rather, it makes sin aware, shows God's wrath and punishment, and casts the sinner in even greater misery and despair. Where the unbeliever is spiritually dead, the law cannot do anything. It's calling, "Get up and serve God! Praise him!" But our enmity against God and the rigidity of unbelief make it impossible. So, the sun is strong, to warm and to make everything light and bright. But when someone closes the windows of his house, he will not come to enjoy them.

3.4 What man falsely trusts in

3.4.1 The error in Galatia

The Galatian congregation were baffled by those who demanded that parts of the Old Testament ceremonial law should also be obeyed by Christians (Gal. 5.2 Circumcision) – even though it **was** fulfilled by Christ's incarnation. Such things are required in some sects today¹¹.

3.4.2 The less obvious mistake

In addition, we also have to deal with sins that are not so obvious and gross. Obviously, these are found not only in the legalistic ways, like that of the Pietists, but also in our own hearts. We expect more from the Law than what God's will demands. The Law makes us aware of sin and how we reject God's will. If a Christian seeks to improve himself, or if a pastor is looking to improve his church, this will lead him into a wrong direction. The sermons will become more legalistic, he tries to create the will and desire in a Christian by driving him with the law. But the law can only help one to recognise his sins and then show what good works are. To awaken the desire and love in the heart of the sinner, this can only be accomplished by God's grace through gospel. This is done by the Holy Spirit: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3: 2). Thus, even after the sinner has recognized his sin, God-pleasing true repentance (which alone occurs in faith in Christ) is awakened by God's loving affection: "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2: 4).

3.5 The biblical balance of confessional writings

Our confessional writings show this subtle difference in the application of the law: if the believers in this life were completely renewed here and were without sin, they no longer needed a law. They would do anything that God wills without admonition or compulsion (the feeling that I must DO this or else!). But even though their sin is atoned for by Christ's sacrifice and not counted against them for damnation, they still have their old man in them. Therefore, the believers also need exhortations, the driving of the law, with its warnings and its threats against evil desires and inclinations – against their old Adam¹². There will be more about that later.

"For the law says that it is God's will and command that we should walk in the new life, but there is

11 z.B. Sieben-Tags-Adventisten, Sabbat

12 Luther, Kirchenpostille, 19. Sonntag nach Trinitatis

not the power and fortune to begin and to do it, but the Holy Spirit, not by the law, but by the law is given and received through the preaching of the gospel, Gal. 3, renew the heart. 12] Then the Holy Spirit uses the law to teach the born-again from it, and show them in the Ten Commandments, what is the "pleasing will of God," Rom. 12 "... for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:); the law admonishes them to do so, since they are lazy, negligent, and unruly by nature; He punishes them by the law, using both offices [Law and Gospel] together: he kills and makes alive, he leads into hell and leads them out again; which purpose is not only for comforting, but also punishing, as it is written, "When the Holy Ghost comes, the world shall be, [including the old Adam], to punish for sin, and for righteousness, and judgment." 13] But sin is everything that is against the law of God. 14] And St. Paul says, " All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction," etc., and punishment is the very function [purpose] of the law. Therefore, whenever the faithful stumble, they are punished by the Holy Spirit out of the law and by the same Spirit, and restored with the preaching of the holy Gospel."¹³

3.6 Here reason must be trapped under the word of God

If a Christian, by his human reason, doesn't look at the law correctly, and how it serves him in this way, but expects improvement and progress through it, he will go off in a wrong direction. By nature, and apart from God's grace, man judges the law and its fulfilment according to his own rational thinking. This thinking is focused on himself, not to God. He seeks His own in everything. Therefore, all knowledge, virtue and all that is good is naturally sought but these good things become bad because they are based on one's self rather than on God. For how could someone prefer the goods to God whom he does not love above all things? How should he love Him if he does not know him? How should he know him, if he is so much in darkness by the fault of original sin (that is original sin and his innate hostility to God) (which concerns the knowledge and fortune of his will)? Luther writes that if faith does not illuminate a man, and if love does not free him, then he cannot want, possess or do any good. He can only do that which evil even if it is good in one's eyes¹⁴.

This is of the utmost importance in daily Christian life! No Christian can expect from the law more than what it can do. Above all, he must not let his old man or his reason judge whether he will be saved or not. This certainly leads to doubt, to complete uncertainty, whether he will be saved or not, and finally unbelief. "Are you a saint? Are you really God's child? "Reason says," No! for I know sin in me. The Gospel, on the other hand, says: "For you are all children of Christ Jesus by the faith of God." (Gal 3:26) And, as Paul writes: "To the saints in Ephesus, the Believers in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1: 1). He who believes in Christ as his Saviour, has peace with God, and is a child of God, a "saint," not by his own doing, but by God's grace and forgiveness in Christ.

Here, on the one hand, it becomes clear how listening to human reason in spiritual things leads to a fatal error. On the other hand, one should be very careful to rightly distinguish the law from the Gospel. The law must be limited to its God-given purpose or function.

4 The law is good when one uses it rightly

If we speak of the divine law, then, as elsewhere in Scripture, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them

¹³ BSELK, SD VI, 11 Vom dritten Gebrauch des Gesetzes

¹⁴ Luther, Kommentar zum Römerbrief (Kap. 8,1ff.), Zusammenfassung eines Abschnittes

because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2:14). Luther says: The Gospel teaches that God's law is spiritual, and that it is impossible for human nature to fulfil it; God's Spirit must fulfil it in us through faith¹⁵ (Romans 8 : 3-4)

4.1 By externalities the law is not fulfilled

At no time has man fulfilled the divine **law** by purely external action. Cain sacrificed (Genesis 4: 1ff.), but God did not graciously look at his sacrifice because he was not pious in his heart. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight." (Proverbs 15: 8).

So, he said to Israel, "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savour your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments." (Amos 5:21-23).

True repentance is done in faith in the merciful God in Christ: " So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm." (Joel 2:13).

4.2 God demands love

"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1: 5), and "therefore love is the fulfilment of the law" (Romans 13:10). This love, which makes all external service to God and the nearest to God agreeable, flows from faith in Christ. Faith enjoys Christ's love and receives it as a divine gift in the Holy Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Gal 5:22).

In all explanations of the commandments Luther teaches from Scripture the fulfilment through works of love. For example, in the eighth commandment: You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbour, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way. "First the prohibition, then the action in the Love through faith in Christ.

Our confession strongly states that the preaching of the law without Christ produces either presumptuous people who think they will fulfil the law with purely external works, or those who eventually fall into despair because they recognize their misery, and don't get preached any way out. But Christ is spiritualizing the law. He reveals his wrath from heaven and teaches people to recognize their sin. In addition, Moses (here another expression for the bare law) could not have brought them, as Paul writes: "But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ." (2 Corinthians 3:14ff.).

"It is all the law of the sermon that preaches of our sins and God's wrath, whether or not it happens. Again, the gospel is such a sermon that shows and gives nothing but mercy and forgiveness in Christ; though it is true and right that the apostles and preachers of the gospel (as Christ Himself

¹⁵ Luther, Kommentar zum Römerbrief (Kap. 8,1ff.), Zusammenfassung eines Abschnittes

did) affirm and begin the preaching of the law to those who are yet to know their sin, and are frightened of God's wrath, as John 16 says, "[The Holy Ghost] will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me." Yes, what a more serious, more terrible display and preaching of God's wrath over sin than the suffering and death of Christ his Son? But as long as one preaches God's wrath and frightens one another it is not the Gospel, nor is it the preaching of Christ. Rather, it is Moses and the law upon those who are unrepentant. For the Gospel and Christ are not meant to frighten or condemn, but to console and uplift the ones who are frightened and filled with despair. "And again:" Christ speaks in John 16: "The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin"; which will not happen without the law's explanation."¹⁶

Because it is impossible for the law to bring about fulfilment in us sinners, it must remain in its God-given place. On the question of man "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). The law cannot answer that. It rather shows the sinner incessantly that he just cannot be saved. It keeps his sinfulness in mind.

4.3 It has to be spiritually directed

The law must be "spiritually understood", i.e. in the understanding of God's will, which the Holy Spirit gives through God's word. Only then applies: "We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully [i.e. correctly]." (1 Timothy 1:8). And only then does the divine law come to the goal to which God has given it. If it is not used properly, the opposite is achieved: not blessing, but cursing the sinner, not eternal salvation, but eternal damnation, not certainty of salvation through the gospel. Then the sinner will only remain in the knowledge of his guilt – without the comfort of the gospel. Then he remains a proud hypocrite in spiritual arrogance like the Pharisees - or he falls into despair. The Lutheran Church has therefore summarized from Scripture this knowledge of the functions of the law, as we find in the Little Catechism:

The law serves as a MIRROR ("Through the law comes knowledge of sin" Rom 3:20), as a BAR (It stops by its threats the grossest outbursts of sin., Romans 2: 14f.) And as a RULE (It shows the Believers, which are good works Rule of the life, Ps. 119:32: "I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart [i.e., give me a heart that is willing].")¹⁷
"1) Since the difference between the law and the gospel is such a glorious light, which serves to correctly divide God's Word, it explains the understanding of holy prophets and the Apostles' writings, it is with special diligence that we keep these two doctrines distinct from each other, not mixing the law with the Gospel, thereby obscuring [blinding people from seeing] the merits of Christ, and robbing sad consciences of their consolation, which they otherwise would have in the holy Gospel. The Gospel speaks louder and with all purity, enabling us to stand firm in the worst of our trials and against the terrors of the law."¹⁸

16 BSELK, SD V, 10-12 Luther wird zitiert (Auslegung des Evang. 5. nach Trinitatis)

17 **Riegel** (usus legis civilis, dem bürgerlichen Recht, usus politicus) | **Spiegel** (usus elenchticus = der aufdeckende Gebrauch) der Erkenntnis der Sünde | **Regel**, Melancthon in Loci communes rerum theologiarum (1535) usus in renatis = Gebrauch bei den Wiedergeborenen) oder usus tertius legis = der dritte Gebrauch des Gesetzes
 Quenstedt unterscheidet einen vierfachen Gebrauch: (1) politicus - Welt (Riegel 1.Tim. 1,9) (2) elenchticus - (Spiegel Röm. 3,20/ 7,7) (3) paedagogicus - durch Gesetz Erlösung von erkannter Schuld suchen (Gal. 3,24) (4) didactus - belehren lassen, was gute Werke sind (Tit. 2,8)

Luther: W² 9,408 / § 443 Vom zweifachen Gebrauch des Gesetzes und die BSELK: FC 5 Von Gesetz und Evangelium (SD 5) und FC 6 Vom dritten Gebrauch des Gesetzes (SD 6 Abs 9 Verweis auf Luthers Kirchenpostille)

Johann Andreas Quenstedt (* 13. August 1617 in Quedlinburg; † 22. Mai 1688 in Wittenberg) war nach **Martin Chemnitz** und **Johann Gerhard** einer der wichtigsten Vertreter der lutherischen Orthodoxie, genauer einer der letzten Vertreter der Hochorthodoxie (1600–1680)

18 BSELK, SD V, 1

In a sermon on the third advent of Matthew 11: 2-101, Luther emphasizes:

*The divine pledge of grace and forgiveness of sins is called 'gospel'. You must not understand the gospel in an other way as a promise of the grace of God and forgiveness of sins. The understanding to the contrary has led them to fail to understand the Epistles of Paul. So they do not know what 'law and gospel' is. Therefore, they also consider Christ a new law teacher and the gospel nothing but a teaching full of new laws. But the Greek word 'gospel' in English means 'good news' because it preaches the healing doctrine of life. God offers grace and forgiveness of sins. That is why the gospel is not about doing, but about faith. He who believes in it receives the grace of God and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the heart becomes happy and does the law voluntarily and above all without fear of punishment. It also seeks no reward for it, because it is enough for him the rich grace of God. In this way the law is quite fulfilled.*¹⁹

5 What does that mean for us sinful people?

5.1 Christ is the end of the law

This is something every Christian should keep in mind: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Romans 10: 4). Christ has fulfilled the divine law in our place. "The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). He himself speaks: "Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). And the apostle teaches, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38f.).

5.2 Blessed are they who are spiritually poor ...

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5: 3), says Christ, pointing to the ancient prophecies: "... the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." (Luke 7:22f.). This is also found in Psalm 72: "For He will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in His sight." (Ps. 72:12-14)"

The divine promise of all grace and consolation is proclaimed to the poor. God gives them this freely through Christ, that whoever believes that all his sins are forgiven, for whom the law is fulfilled, it redeems and frees the conscience and gives eternal life. What more could a distressed conscience hear happier than that? What could make a despondent heart bolder and bolder than hearing such comforting promises from his God? Sin, death, hell, and all evil have lost all power!

5.3 Who are these poor?

It is a sermon only for the poor – though it is to be preached to the whole world. Therefore, the poor are not the beggars and those who have little money and good. They are the spiritually poor. It is those who have been crushed in their minds who are so in the agony of their consciences longing

¹⁹ W² 11,83 (Abs. 25f.)

for help and comfort, they do not long for external goods and gifts. One of these is shown in Scripture in the Gospel of the paralyzed, whom his four friends bring to Jesus. What does the LORD say to him, before whom all hearts are open, who knows our thoughts from afar? He does not speak: Be healed of your illness! He says to him, "Rest assured, my son, your sins are forgiven." (Matthew 9:2). Yes, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." (Ps 34:18, cf Luke 18:13). Even though the Gospel is preached and heard throughout the world, it is not accepted as such but only by those who are spiritually poor.

5.4 and the rich?

The spiritually rich, however, are the self-righteous ones, the bitter enemies of the gospel! They are rich in good works – but the gospel is only for the poor in spirit. But the self-righteous do not stop and think of their condition. To those who have recognized themselves as sinners, and who, therefore, heartily rejoice over God's grace and goodness, to them the self-righteous people say, "You take it too easy!" We read about this struggle in Matthew: "Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'? "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet." (Matthew 21:42-46).

5.5 That is why the law teaches us to recognize our poverty

God wrote His law upon the hearts of all mankind at creation.²⁰ He repeated it in a written way on two stone tablets about 2,500 years later. People should realize what a benefit the Gospel of the Saviour of sinners is; that's why God preaches the law so sharply. This is what the Apostle says with the words: "But Scripture has made it all under sin, so that the promise would come by faith in Jesus Christ, given to those who believe." (Gal 3:22). That is, everyone should and must feel the chains of sin in which he is bound, that he would flee to Christ, who alone can break those chains. So the gospel covers the table of grace, but the law first makes man a hungry guest. The gospel praises the Doctor and shows the way to Him, but before that, the law has to make people aware of their illness and feel the pain. The Gospel sings and sounds that all debt is paid, but the law must show us the promissory note. The Gospel is full of comfort and joy, but the law must first create the thirst for that comfort.

Just as the law paves the way for the gospel, the law must always be at the side of the gospel, so that the person remains faithful to Christ and in His grace. The believer is still surrounded by sin and inside of his heart there are still many seeds of sin and unbelief. Thus, God's Word shows him that he must cling to Christ our Saviour so that he can be certain of his salvation.

Vom dritten Brauch des Gesetzes | The Third Use of the Law²¹

Our confession says about the third use of the law:

²⁰ BSELK, SD VI, 5: "Denn das Gesetz Gottes [ist] ihnen in das Herz geschrieben, und dem ersten Menschen [wurde] gleich nach seiner Erschaffung auch ein Gesetz gegeben, danach er sich verhalten sollte."

²¹ Konkordienformel, Solida Declaratio VI,6-9 | The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord 6,6-9

6] Und zwar, wenn die gläubigen und auserwählten Kinder Gottes durch den einwohnenden Geist in diesem Leben vollkÖmmlich verneürt wÖrden, also daÙ sie in ihrer Natur und allen derselben KrÄften ganz und gar der SÖnden ledig wÄren, bedÖrften sie keines Gesetzes und also auch keines Treibers, sondern sie tÄten fÖr sich selbst [von selbst] und ganz freiwillig ohne alle Lehre, Vermahnung, Anhalten oder Treiben des Gesetzes, was sie nach Gottes Willen zu tun schuldig sind, gleichwie die Sonne, der Mond und das ganze himmlische Gestirn seinen ordentlichen Lauf ohne Vermahnung, ohne Anhalten, Treiben, Zwang oder NÖtigung fÖr sich selbst unverhindert hat, nach der Ordnung Gottes, die ihnen Gott einmal gegeben hat, ja, wie die lieben Engel einen ganz freiwilligen Gehorsam leisten.

7] Nachdem aber die GlÄubigen in diesem Leben nicht vollkÖmmlich, ganz und gar, complete vel consummative, verneürt werden; denn obwohl ihre SÖnde durch den vollkommenen Gehorsam Christi bedeckt [ist], daÙ sie den GlÄubigen zur Verdammnis nicht zugerechnet wird, auch durch den Heiligen Geist die AbtÖtung des alten Adams und die Verneuerung im Geist ihres GemÖts angefangen [ist] so hÄngt ihnen doch noch immer der alte Adam in ihrer Natur und allen desselben innerlichen und ÄuÙerlichen KrÄften an; 8] davon der Apostel geschrieben RÖm. 7: "Ich weiÙ, das in mir, das ist, in meinem Fleisch, wohnt nichts Gutes." Und abermals: "Ich weiÙ nicht, was ich tÖ; denn ich tÖ nicht, was ich will, sondern das ich hasse, das tÖ ich." Item: "Ich sehe ein ander Gesetz in meinen Gliedern, das da widerstrebet dem Gesetz in meinem GemÖte und nimmt mich gefangen in der SÖnde Gesetz." Item: "Das Fleisch gelÖstet wider den Geist und den Geist wider das Fleisch; dieselbigen sind widereinander, daÙ ihr nicht tut, was ihr wollet."

9] Darum so bedÖrfen in diesem Leben die rechtglÄubigen, auserwÄhlten und wiedergeborenen Kinder Gottes von wegen

6] And, indeed, if the believing and elect children of God were completely renewed in this life by the indwelling Spirit, so that in their nature and all its powers they were entirely free from sin, they would need no law, and hence no one to drive them either, but they would do of themselves, and altogether voluntarily, without any instruction, admonition, urging or driving of the Law, what they are in duty bound to do according to God's will; just as the sun, the moon, and all the constellations of heaven have their regular course of themselves, unobstructed, without admonition, urging, driving, force, or compulsion, according to the order of God which God once appointed for them, yea, just as the holy angels render an entirely voluntary obedience.

7] However, believers are not renewed in this life perfectly or completely, complete vel consummative [as the ancients say]; for although their sin is covered by the perfect obedience of Christ, so that it is not imputed to believers for condemnation, and also the mortification of the old Adam and the renewal in the spirit of their mind is begun through the Holy Ghost, nevertheless the old Adam clings to them still in their nature and all its internal and external powers. 8] Of this the apostle has written Rom. 7:18ff.: I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing. And again: For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do; Likewise: I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. Likewise, Gal. 5:17: The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would.

9] Therefore, because of these lusts of the flesh the truly believing, elect, and regenerate children of God need in this life not only the

<p>solcher Gelüste des Fleisches nicht allein des Gesetzes täglicher Lehre und Vermahnung, Warnung und Dräuung, sondern auch oftermals der Strafen, damit sie aufgemuntert [werden] und dem Geist Gottes folgen, wie geschrieben steht Ps. 119: "Es ist mir gut, Her, daß du mich demütigest, auf daß ich deine Rechte lerne." Und abermals, 1 Kor. 9: "Ich betäube meinen Leib und zähme ihn, daß ich nicht den andern predige und selbst verwerflich werde." Und abermals, Hebr. 12: "Seid ihr ohne Züchtigung, welcher sie alle sind teilhaftig worden, so seid ihr Bastarde und nicht Kinder," wie D. Luther solches mit mehr Worten in der Kirchenpostille, im Sommerteil, über die Epistel am 19. Sonntag nach Trinitatis ausführlich erklärt hat.</p>	<p>daily instruction and admonition, warning, and threatening of the Law, but also frequently punishments, that they may be roused [the old man is driven out of them] and follow the Spirit of God, as it is written Ps. 119:71: It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes. And again, 1 Cor. 9:27: I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. And again, Heb. 12:8: But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons; as 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.</p>
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5.6 So the merciful God makes us poor sinners rich

The gospel calls to us, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that if he be rich, yet he became poor for your sakes, that ye might be rich by his poverty." (2 Cor 8:9). There is no greater treasure in this world than God's mercy in Christ. There is no more precious knowledge than that a sinner, through the gospel, recognizes his Redeemer and, finally, in faith places all confidence in him. The forgiveness of all sins, and the hope of eternal bliss given in God's promise, is the highest and greatest that a man can receive in his life.

"For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10: 11ff.)

Faith in Christ, who takes and holds all these heavenly treasures, is the gift of all gifts. We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:19). He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

Where the gospel rules in the heart of a miserable, but a redeemed and liberated sinner, there is joy and thanksgiving. Since he does not wait until the law comes, but is full of desire and love for Christ and all good. It loves God, and it loves its neighbor. Such a person helps where he can without thinking of the law only once. He is diligent in good works - and does not even notice it himself.

Do not let your sanity tell you anything!

Lutherzitat Gal. 2,13

I am saying this in order that we may learn the doctrine of justification with the greatest diligence and distinguish most clearly between the Law and the Gospel. On this issue we must not

do anything out of insincerity or yield submission to anyone if we want to keep the truth of the Gospel and the faith sound and inviolate; for, as I have said, these are easily bruised. Here let reason be far away, that enemy of faith, which, in the temptations of sin and death, relies not on the righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness, of which it is completely ignorant, but on its own righteousness or, at most, on the righteousness of the Law. As soon as reason and the Law are joined, faith immediately loses its virginity. For nothing is more hostile to faith than the Law and reason; nor can these two enemies be overcome without great effort and work, and you must overcome them if you are to be saved. Therefore when your conscience is terrified by the Law and is wrestling with the judgment of God, do not consult either reason or the Law, but rely only on grace and the Word of comfort. Here take your stand as though you had never heard of the Law. Ascend into the darkness, where neither the Law nor reason shines, but only the dimness of faith (1 Cor. 13:12), which assures us that we are saved by Christ alone, without any Law.³² Thus the Gospel leads us above and beyond the light of the Law and reason into the darkness of faith, where the Law and reason have no business. The Law, too, deserves a hearing, but in its proper place and time. When Moses was on the mountain speaking with God face to face, he neither had nor established nor administered the Law. But now that he has come down from the mountain, he is a lawgiver and rules the people by the Law. So the conscience must be free from the Law, but the body must obey the Law.²²

Franz Pieper said: "Luther is ...since the time of the apostles, the greatest teacher of the church «²³
I am firmly convinced that he is right.

5.7 Law and gospel in the fear of conscience

See the book from which we will read if we have enough time.

Luther Walch² 9,210 (272) - 222 (309)

²² LUTHER'S WORKS, VOL 26, CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE Saint Louis, Missouri, LECTURES ON GALATIANS 1535 (Gal 2,13)

²³ Pieper, D. Franz, Das Grundbekenntnis der evangelisch - lutherischen Kirche, Kapitel 11, S. 62

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