

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Jeremiah 28:5-9

⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD. ⁶ He said, “Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD’s house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. ⁷ Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: ⁸ From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹ But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true.”

28:5 JEREMIAH REPLIED – Having the truth on his side, he possessed the boldness which a true servant of the Lord should always exhibit. (Kretzmann)

28:6-9 Jeremiah’s response was marked by restraint. Nothing would have pleased him more than to affirm the prediction of an immediate deliverance of the people he loved so dearly. (TLSB)

28:6 See 1Ki 1:36. *Amen*. See 11:5 and note. (CSB)

It means “so be it!” (Kretzmann)

may the LORD fulfill. The sign of a true prophecy (see v. 9). (CSB)

Jeremiah was personally in the heartiest accord with this, idea of the early restoration of the captives and of the Temple vessels; nothing would have pleased him better than to have this fortunate turn of events come true. (Kretzmann)

28:7 *Nevertheless*. Though in sympathy with what Hananiah is predicting, Jeremiah reminds him that their true predecessors were basically prophets of doom (see v. 8). (CSB)

28:8 EARLY TIMES – Isaiah, Joel, Hosea, Amos, and others. (Kretzmann)

war, disaster and plague. An appropriate modification of Jeremiah’s usual triad (see note on 14:12). (CSB)

28:9 *peace*. Ordinarily the message of false prophets (see 6:14 and note). (CSB)

The future would demonstrate which prophet the Lord had truly sent. (TLSB)

That is, the fulfillment of a prophecy such as had been made by Hananiah would be the best proof of his having spoken the truth. But from the start the presumption of truth is in favor of the prophecies of calamity, since they are connected with danger to him who

brings the message. Prophecies of good fortune may be flattery and have the object of providing their maker with pleasant conditions; it is necessary, therefore, to wait for results before accepting them. (Kretzmann)

EPISTLE – Romans 7:1-13

Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? ² For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. ³ So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. ⁴ So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, ^a the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Luther says: In chapter 7 (Paul) supports the (freedom) with an analogy from married life. When a man dies, his wife is also alone, and thus the one is released entirely from the other. Not that the wife cannot or ought not take another husband, but rather that she is now for the first time really free to take another – something which she could not do previously, before she was free from her husband. So our conscience is free, and the one is released from the other. Not that the conscience is to do nothing, but rather that it is now for the first time really free to hold fast to Christ, the second husband, and bring forth the fruit of life. (TLSB)

Then he depicts more fully the nature of sin and the law, how by means of the law sin now stirs and becomes mighty. The old man comes to hate the law all the more because he cannot pay what the law demands. Sin is his nature and of himself he can do nothing but sin; therefore the law to him is death and torment. Not that the law is bad, but the old man's evil nature cannot endure the good, and the law demands good of him; just as a sick man cannot stand it when he is required to run and jump and do the works of a well man. (TLSB)

Therefore St. Paul concludes that the law, correctly understood and thoroughly grasped, does nothing more than to remind us of our sin, and to slay us by it, making us liable to eternal wrath. All this is fully learned and experienced by our conscience, when it is really struck by the law. Therefore a person must have something other than the law, something more than the law, to make him righteous and save him. But they who do not correctly understand the law are blind. They go ahead in their presumption, thinking to satisfy the law by means of their deeds, not knowing how much the law demands, namely, a willing and happy heart. Therefore they do not see Moses clearly; the veil is put between them and him, and covers him (Ex 34:29-35; 2 Cor 3:12-16). (TLSB)

They he shows how spirit and flesh struggle with one another in a man. He uses himself as an example, in order that we may learn how properly to understand the work of slaying sin within us. He calls both the spirit and the flesh “laws”; for just as it in nature of the divine law to drive men and make demands of them, so the flesh drives men and makes demands. It rages against the spirit, and will have its own way. The spirit, in turn, drives men and makes demands contrary to the flesh, and will have its own way. This tension lasts in us as long as we live; though in one person it is greater, in another less, according as the spirit or the flesh is stronger. Nevertheless the whole man is himself both spirit and flesh, and he fights with himself until he becomes wholly spiritual.” (TLSB)

7:1 BROTHERS – This is an intimate term with which he introduces a section revealing Paul’s personal struggles. (TLSB)

law Perhaps Paul has in mind the Mosaic law, but his concern here is with the fundamental character of law as such. (CSB)

Either Jews or Gentiles familiar with the Law would know the laws of marriage (vv 2–3). (TLSB)

LAW HAS AUTHORITY – The Law demand obedience. (TLSB)

as long as he lives? Laws apply only to living people. (TLSB)

7:2–3 These verses illustrate the principle set down in v. 1. Death decisively changes a person’s relationship to the law. (CSB)

This view of marriage reflects teachings of the Torah, but would also have been familiar to most Gentiles. (TLSB)

7:2 A widowed spouse does not violate wedding vows by remarrying. (TLSB)

7:4 So. Paul now draws the conclusion from the principle stated in v. 1 and illustrated in vv. 2–3. (CSB)

The Law was fulfilled by Jesus’ obedience and sacrificial death. United to Him in Baptism (6:3–5), we are now free from the Law’s condemnation. (TLSB)

died to the law. The law’s power to condemn no longer threatens the Christian, whose death here is to be understood in terms of 6:2–7. There, however, he dies to sin; here he dies to the law. The result is that the law has no more hold on him. (CSB)

through the body of Christ. His physical body (self) crucified. (CSB)

belong to another. The resurrected Christ (see 6:5). The purpose of this union is to produce the fruit of holiness. (CSB)

MIGHT BEAR FRUIT – Our lives are devoted to God’s service. (TLSB)

7:5 *controlled by the sinful nature.* A condition, so far as Christians are concerned, that belongs to the past—the unregenerate state. (CSB)

Controlled by sin (TLSB)

PASSIONS – Can be sinful or righteous; Paul describes control by sinful desires. (TLSB)

aroused by the law. The law not only reveals sin; it also stimulates it. The natural tendency in man is to desire the forbidden thing. (CSB)

Rebellion against the Law may incline sinners to commit more sins. Melancthon: “The Law even increased sin. For when it accuses and terrifies, doubt is kindled, and there follows indignation against God and despair” (*Romans*, p 153). (TLSB)

death.† Physical death and, beyond that, eternal death—final separation from God—were the fruit of our “union” with the law. (CSB)

Apart from Christ, our lives serve sin, not God. This leads to death. (TLSB)

7:6 *what once bound us.* The law; see vv. 4, 6. (CSB)

released from the law. In the sense of its condemnation (see note on v. 4). (CSB)

United to Christ, we have been freed from the Law. (TLSB)

new way of the Spirit. See note on 8:4. (CSB)

A life of faith, given by the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies. (TLSB)

old way of the written code. Life under the OT law. (CSB)

The Law, epitomized in the Ten Commandments. The Law can command but cannot empower us to keep it. (TLSB)

7:1–6 As the Law confronts fallen human nature, it accuses and condemns, revealing sinfulness and the unreachable standard of God’s holiness. Faithless people may be driven to sin and despair by the Law (v 5). Thanks be to God, in Christ we have died to the Law (v 4). Now we need not live in bondage and fear, but in a new life in the Spirit. • O Holy Spirit, fill me with faith and new life, so that I may bear the fruit of love for You. Amen. (TLSB)

Struggling With Sin

⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what

coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.⁹ Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

7:7 More rhetorical questions from Paul (cf 6:1, 15). (TLSB)

we. Christians who have been “released from the Law” (v 6). (TLSB)

Is the law sin? This question was occasioned by the remarks about the law in vv. 4–6. (CSB)

I. Paul seems to be using the first person pronoun of himself, but also as representative of mankind in general (vv. 7–12) and of Christians in particular (vv. 13–25). (CSB)

I would not have known what sin was. The law fulfilled the important function of revealing the presence and fact of sin. (CSB)

The internal sin of evil desires leads to outward sinful acts, yet is not recognized as sinful until we hear God’s forbidding command. “Defects and concupiscence are both sin and punishment” (Ap II 47). (TLSB)

7:8 *opportunity afforded by the commandment.* See note on v. 5. (CSB)

Personification shows sin’s iron grip, which corrupts even our hearing of the Commandments. (TLSB)

covetousness. God’s Ninth and Tenth Commandments may cause fallen humans to rebel and do the exact opposite. (TLSB)

sin is dead. Not nonexistent but not fully perceived. (CSB)

Something is only sinful if God forbids it. The Law naturally stirs up rebellion in sinners. (TLSB)

Apart from the law, sin is dormant. Si is there, but needs a line in the sand to step over in order to show itself as sin. (PBC)

7:9 *Once I was alive.* Paul reviews his own experience from the vantage point of his present understanding. Before he realized that the law condemned him to death, he was alive. Reference is to the time either before his *bar mitzvah* (see below) or before his conversion, when the true rigor of the law became clear to him (see Lk 18:20–21; Php 3:6). (CSB)

Paul thought that he was alive and keeping the Law, but he was really dead in sin (Eph 2:1-2). He realized sin and guilt had been in him all along. (TLSB)

when the commandment came. When Paul came to the realization that he stood guilty before the law—a reference either to his *bar mitzvah*, when he, at age 13, assumed full responsibility for the law, or to the time when he became aware of the full force of the law (at his conversion). (CSB)

If a freshly painted park bench has a WET PAINT sign on it, as surely as night follows day, people will go up and touch the paint to see if it really is wet. The fault lies not with the sign but with the perversity of the passerby. The end result, however, can easily be that the thing that was intended to be helpful and protective now appears to be the problem. (PBC)

I died. Paul came to realize he was condemned to death, because law reveals sin, and sin's wages is death (6:23). (CSB)

7:10 *was intended to bring life.* See Lev 18:5. As it worked out, law became the avenue through which sin entered—both in Paul's experience and in that of mankind. Instead of giving life, the law brought condemnation; instead of producing holiness, it stimulated sin. (CSB)

One who kept the Law perfectly was promised life (Lv 18:5), but no sinful human could reach this standard of holiness. (TLSB)

7:12 *the law is holy.* Despite the despicable use that sin made of the law, the law was not to blame. The law is God's and as such is holy, righteous and good. (CSB)

The Law's effect shows a problem in us, not in the Law. God's Law remains good, even though we cannot keep it. (TLSB)

7:13–25† Whether Paul is describing a Christian or non-Christian experience has been hotly debated through the centuries. Some claim that he is speaking of the non-Christian life as suggested by: (1) the use of phrases such as “sold as a slave to sin” (v. 14), “I know that nothing good lives in me” (v. 18) and “What a wretched man I am!” (v. 24)—which may not seem to describe Christian experience; (2) the contrast between ch. 7 and ch. 8, making it difficult in the opinion of some for the other view to be credible; (3) the problem of the value of conversion if one ends up in spiritual misery. In favor of the view that Paul is describing Christian experience are: (1) the use of the present tense throughout the passage; (2) Paul's humble opinion of himself (v. 18); (3) his high regard for God's law (vv. 14, 16); (4) the location of this passage in the section

of Romans where Paul is dealing with sanctification—the growth of the Christian in holiness. The following notes prefer the latter view. (CSB)

7:13 God’s Law, intended for our good (v 12). (TLSB)

BECOME UTTERLY SINFUL – Sin is not inconsequential. We are not to excuse our sins; we are completely sinful. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 10:34-42

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn ”‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— ³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’³⁷ “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ⁴⁰ “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

10:34 At first glance this saying sounds like a contradiction of Isa 9:6 (“Prince of Peace”), Lk 2:14 (“on earth peace to men”) and Jn 14:27 (“Peace I leave with you”). It is true that Christ came to bring peace—peace between the believer and God, and peace among men. Yet the inevitable result of Christ’s coming is conflict—between Christ and the antichrist, between light and darkness, between Christ’s children and the devil’s children. This conflict can occur even between members of the same family (vv. 35–36). (CSB)

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace (*eirēnēn*) to the earth (*gēn*).” Peace here is reminiscent of the Hebrew shalom, so that we think of more than simply not being at war. Christ came to abolish the false peace of attempting to live in harmony with a sinful and broken world. Only when that false peace is shattered can we see peace between man and God. For the truth to be made plain, the lie must be laid bare. So Christ brings a sword. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

not ... peace, but a sword. Likely surprised the disciples, because earlier Jesus had told them to “let your peace come” on the houses they entered (v 13). Jesus wanted them to realize that His coming was like a sword that split families in two: some were for Him, some were against Him. This same division will be evident in the last judgment. (TLSB)

To be sure, Christ did bring “peace on earth” (Lk 2:14), and he sent his twelve apostles to bestow his “peace” on the houses and individuals who received them and their words (Mt 10:13). It is likely, then, that Jesus’ statement should be understood as a form of

dialectical negation. The first part of the statement is an exaggerated negative statement: “Do not think that I came *only* so as to bring peace upon the earth.” However, given the condition of the sinful human heart and the unchanging nature of Christ’s message, which calls for repentance and faith (4:17; 10:7), the inevitable result of Christ’s coming will be conflict and strife: “I came *not only* so as to bring peace, but *even more*, a sword” (CC)

10:35-37 Exposing those lies inevitably causes conflict. Nowhere does this come closer than when those fights begin at home. Though it causes conflict, we need to understand it is not love nor is it the Gospel simply to “live and let live.” Love for Christ and for one another compels us to speak the truth in love, even knowing that sometimes that can cause division. Honest division is better than false peace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

10:35 MAN AGAINST FATHER – The family is the most intimate group of people known to man. God wants families to be at peace. But spiritual differences, owing to the sinfulness of human nature, cause the sharpest and deepest conflicts so that those who ought to be closest are set against each other the most.

This conflict will at times be bitter; even the closest natural relationships might be severed. In the patriarchal culture of the first century AD, a believing son or daughter who refused an unbelieving father’s anti-Christian direction could come under severe censure, punishment, and shame. At various times and places in the Roman Empire, to be a Christian and refuse to offer obeisance to Caesar and the pagan gods was considered a seditious capital crime; many Christians literally bore a “cross” (10:38) or perished by fire or wild beasts or gladiators. Disciples of Jesus in less-hostile regions may not face bodily harm, but may still lose cherished relationships with loved ones because of their confession of faith. Those losses may feel insurmountably great and will be a “cross” to bear. (CC)

10:36 ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD – Cf v 21. Jesus distanced Himself from His own family, some of whom did not believe in Him (12:46–50; Mk 3:21; Jn 7:5). (TLSB)

In these divided families, the believer will sooner or later face this challenge from unbelieving loved ones: “Choose me and my ways rather than your Jesus and his ways.” This is merely an application of the broader principle that Jesus has just taught concerning confessing him before men (10:32–33). To be sure, Christians will be more loving, more patient, more accepting of non-Christian family members than they otherwise would be, since the love they receive from Christ enables the Christians to display Christlike love, whether or not it is requited. At times God will use such a loving witness as part of his way of bringing unbelievers to faith; they may be won “without a word” (see 1 Pet 3:1–2). Other times, however, the non-believing spouse or parents or children will demand allegiance and conformity in ways to which the Christian simply must not agree. Then, the disciple must love Jesus more than father or mother or son or daughter. (CC)

10:37 *loves ... more than Me.* More important than loving parents and other family members is loyalty to Christ. (TLSB)

not worthy of Me. Cf vv 11, 13. To value family more than Jesus means that one is not fit to be a disciple. St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “Although it is impious to despise a mother, yet to despise her for Christ’s sake is most pious” (*SLSB*, p 212). (TLSB)

10:38 *take his cross.* The first mention of the cross in Matthew’s Gospel. The cross was an instrument of death and here symbolizes the necessity of total commitment—even unto death—on the part of Jesus’ disciples (see note on Mk 8:34). (CSB)

The cross represented death; it was common for Romans to crucify criminals. Jesus expected His followers to be willing to die, if necessary, rather than to give up their commitment to Him. (TLSB)

While it is tempting to make this verse the focal point and proclaim a sermon with a heavy Law emphasis, this should be resisted. Being a Christian means already having died in Baptism and rising to new life in Christ. Sermons that focus on the need of the individual Christian to take up their cross will inevitably make an obligation of what is, in God’s design, good news. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

10:39 FINDS HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT...LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE WILL FIND IT – Contrasts earthly and eternal life. Clinging to earthly life forfeits eternal life, but losing one’s life for Christ’s sake gains real life. (TLSB)

Because the issue is the identity of Jesus and faith in him, however, the disciple knows there is no middle ground. Strangely, if a Christian were to long for the old way of life and cave in to family pressures to reject Christ and his work, he would thereby lose the only real life there is: eternal life with God through Jesus (10:39). Paradoxically, when a Christian accepts the sword, carries the cross, and suffers the loss of his former relationships and status—perhaps even giving up his bodily life (10:28)—because he clings in faith to Jesus, that believer will discover that he has found real life forever. (CC)

We are not our own. We have been bought with a price (1 Cor 6:19b–20a). The one who seeks to preserve those things that are distinctively his, to enlarge his own kingdom, will, in the end, lose it all. The one who is willing to be poured out (cf. Phil 2:17) for the sake of others will find a depth of purpose and meaning to life that evades those focused solely on the concerns of this life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

10:34–39 The radical nature of following Jesus may result in conflict and divisions within families. Jesus wants His disciples to strive for eternal life, even if this means sacrificing earthly benefits. In all honesty, we must confess that we often fail to put Jesus first in our lives, that we do not take up His cross and follow Him. What we fail to do, Jesus did for us. He took up His

cross and paid the penalty for the sins of the world. In Him, we have peace. • Thank You, Jesus, for bearing my cross on Calvary and making me Your highest priority. Amen. (TLSB)

10:40 RECEIVES ME RECEIVES THE ONE WHO SENT ME – The disciples were authorized messengers of Jesus. To receive them was the same as receiving Christ and the Father who sent Him (cf v 14). (TLSB)

As Jesus' missionary proclaimers, beginning with the Twelve, go out with the message of the Good News, they are not going out alone. The Son of God will accompany them, to such an extent that when people receive the proclaimers and believe their message about the Christ, they are receiving Christ himself (10:40). This means, indeed, that the Father, because he is the one who sent Jesus into the world, will also be present and received when Christian proclaimers encounter eager and believing responses. This message of Christ's identification with his disciples in mission is found elsewhere in this Gospel, in the NT, and in early Christian literature. The final words of Matthew's narrative offer a promise that is directly parallel to Jesus' words here at the end of the Missionary Discourse: "Look, I am with you for all the days, until the consummation of the age" (28:20). This last word of Christ in Matthew's Gospel is not a general promise of Christ's presence; it is attached to the command to make disciples by baptizing and teaching (28:19–20). Mt 28:20 promises that when the church, beginning with the Twelve, makes disciples, Jesus is with his messengers, there in the mission as it takes place through baptizing in the name of the Trinity and teaching all the words of Jesus. (CC)

10:41 prophet. John was the last prophet of the old covenant. (CSB)

Not only the apostles but also others served as Gospel witnesses. (TLSB)

WILL RECEIVE A RIGHTEOUS MAN'S REWARD – The very reward which will be given the righteous man will be given the one who welcomes him. For example see Joshua 2:1 and Hebrews 11:31. Rahab the harlot welcomed righteous men and will receive her reward.

10:42 little ones. Jesus was likely gesturing to young children, but may have been referring also to those who believe in Jesus with a simple, childlike faith (cf 18:1–14). (TLSB)

cup of cold water ... reward. Someone who performs even a small act of love will be rewarded. (TLSB)

ποτήριον ψυχροῦ μόνον εἰς ὄνομα μαθητοῦ—The neuter singular of the adjective μόνος, "only," functions adverbially here (BDAG, 2 b), limiting "gives" to "*only/merely* a cup of cold water" as a trifling, insignificant gift that nevertheless shall receive its eschatological reward. Matthew frequently uses μόνος as an adjective, but there are other times where the neuter form μόνον functions as an adverb (e.g., 5:47; 9:21; 14:36; 21:19, 21). (CC)

Such disciples of Jesus believe that their lives possess eternal significance. They go out with the prayer that others will receive them for what they truly are: ordained men, or laymen and women, who bear the prophetic Word now fulfilled in Jesus the Christ; righteous ones who freely give of the righteousness they have received in Jesus. Those who welcome them because they believe their words (Mt 10:13–14) will not lose their reward on the great Day. That reward of resurrection to eternal life is the same: those who believe the preaching and receive Baptism in the triune name receive the same reward as the faithful missionary preachers and baptizers. Even a simple act of hospitality (“a cup of cold water,” 10:42) shown to the vulnerable and persecuted missionaries, the “little ones” who bring the eschatological Good News of Jesus, is a sign that the salvation they have offered has been received in faith. (CC)

No calling is more blessed than to be a herald of the Good News. Let all who are called to this work be encouraged by the words of their Master. And may those same words encourage all believers to support their pastor-heralds in ways great and small. (CC)

10:40–42 Jesus says much about the difficulties that the disciples will encounter as they carry out their mission. But He concludes His sermon by promising a reward to those who support the Gospel message and fellow disciples. Yet no reward can match the blessings of grace given to those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus as their Savior (Eph 2:8–10). He gives peace with God, patience in time of tribulation, confidence to pray, and finally eternal life. • Loving Savior, I deserve no reward for my words and actions. Yet You promise rich blessings to those who receive the Gospel. Thank You. Amen. (TLSB)