

## *Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!*

SUNDAY.

*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. – Romans 6:23.*

The real and adequate punishment with which God threatens those who hate Him and transgress His commandments is death. "The wages of sin is death." "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," God said to Adam in Paradise, when He forbade him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:17.)

What is *death*? Let us add another Word of God to show us what death really is: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them." (Deuteronomy 27:26 & Galatians 3:10.) The curse of God and death go together. So death is God's wrath and disfavor, temporal death, and eternal damnation. The curse of God is upon the transgressors of His commandments, His wrath and disfavor; and through temporal death they enter eternal death, eternal damnation. It is a terrible thing to hate that God who is Holiness and Righteousness itself, and to transgress His commandments. No creature can do that and go unpunished. -

–But there is a great and gracious deliverance. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." In Jesus Christ, our Savior and Atoner, there is grace for us sinners and blessing and eternal life. In Jesus Christ the love of God embraces us in time and eternity, and abolishes death. But this is a gift, a free gift of God; we cannot merit that with works as we have merited death. God gives us eternal life in Christ, freely and without price, by grace only. And He offers us this gift through His Word and His Spirit. And we, we Christians, who believe in Jesus Christ and accept this gift of God, have eternal life.

*PRAYER.* – Holy and righteous God, merciful Father! By my sin and transgression of Your commandments I have deserved death. You say it, O truthful God, and I know it. But, O God, You also say that You give me eternal life through Jesus Christ, my Lord. And it is grace alone that moved You to draw me to my Savior, and thus to make me an heir of eternal life. Now complete Your grace in me, O

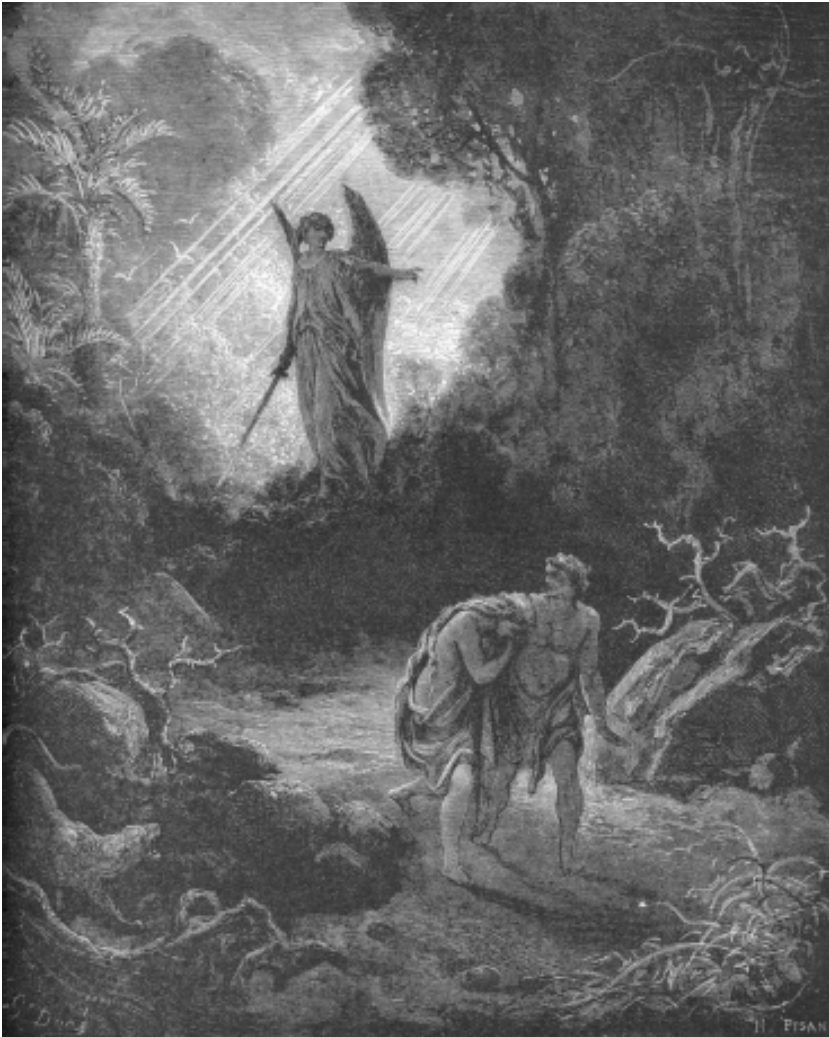


Illustration: Expulsion from the Garden

A Devotional for the  
Week of the Third Sunday after Trinity.

God of mercy, and help me to continue with my Savior in true faith and so to obtain life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn 418, 1. 2.

WITH broken heart, and contrite sigh,  
A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry;  
Thy pardoning grace is rich and free;  
O God, be merciful to me!

I smite upon my troubled breast,  
With deep and conscious guilt oppressed;  
Christ and His Cross my only plea;  
O God, be merciful to me!

MONDAY.

*Enter not into judgment with Thy servants; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified. – Psalm 143:2.*

Is it true that all men, without exception, have deserved death by their transgression of the divine Law? And is it true that all men without exception can receive eternal life only through the free grace and gift of God? Can no man keep God's commandments as He would have us keep them? Can no man stand before the judgment-seat of God?

– Inspired by the Holy Ghost, David says to God: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." And he furthermore says: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They, are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psalm 14:2-3.) No, "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." (Ecclesiastes 7:20.) "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6.) Natural man, man as he is by nature since the Fall, cannot keep the Law of God, no, not in the least; for in all that he does the

heart is lacking: the love of God; his best works are not done to please God, they are as an empty shell without the kernel.

And the regenerate Christian, who possesses the Holy Ghost, can fulfill the Law of God but imperfectly, because sin still clings to him. Regenerate Paul says by inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12.) And he says: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7:18.) It is certain: every man deserves death because of his sin, and can only receive eternal life through the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, only as a gift, as a present.

*PRAYER.* – Holy God, I accuse myself, and I humbly confess that by sinning against You I have deserved death, and daily deserve it. But I rely upon Your grace promised me in the Gospel in which You have pledged forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation to me for Jesus' sake. And I confidently pray as You have taught me to pray: "Enter not into judgment with Your servant; for in Your sight shall no man be justified." Amen.

Hymn 421, 3.

Lord, Thee I seek; – I merit naught,  
Yet pity and restore me;  
Be not Thy wrath, just God, my lot,  
Thy Son hath suffered for me.

TUESDAY.

*By the Law is the knowledge of sin. – Romans 3:20.*

God knows, of course, that we cannot keep His Law as He would have us keep it. But we also should know it. Now because of that faint knowledge of the Law which man still has by nature man

naturally also knows something about his transgression of the Law, hence of his sin. But God wants to deepen this knowledge, make it more thorough. We must know our total depravity. Such knowledge is wrought by His Law, His Law revealed in the Bible. There we behold as in a mirror how unholy we are; for there we see how holy we ought to be.

The Law reveals to us the inmost crevices of our hearts, and lays bare the evil lust, which hates God, and which nestles there like a venomous sin-vermin. This evil lust is the very basic sin within us, from which all the various sins are born. Of this fact we have no true knowledge without the Law. And so without the Law we do not know the full force and awfulness of our sin, its depth and enormity. This is what St. Paul refers to when he writes: "Nay, I had not known sin but by the Law; for I had not known lust except the Law had said: Thou shalt not covet." (Romans 7:7.)

By the Law is the knowledge of sin. Why does God want us to thus learn to know our sin through the Law? That we might cling all the closer to Jesus in true faith and to the righteousness which He has purchased for us and given to us. True, the Law, and the knowledge of sin which we gain through it, does not work faith, not in the least. The Gospel and the knowledge of the grace of God in Christ alone does this. But the Gospel makes use of the Law and thereby shows us how hopelessly lost we are without Christ, and impels us all the more to seek refuge in the loving arms of our Savior.

*PRAYER.* – My God, I, Your child, give thanks to You that by Your Law You reveal to me my total depravity and that by Your Gospel You reveal to me Your grace, which heals all our diseases. O Lord, give me Your Holy Spirit, that, the more fully I learn to know my sin, the more firmly I may hold to Your grace which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord. Amen.

Hymn 314, 9.

The Law reveals the guilt of sin  
And makes man conscience-stricken;

The gospel then doth enter in  
The sinful soul to quicken.  
Come to the Cross, trust Christ and live;  
The Law to you no peace can give  
With all its good endeavors.

WEDNESDAY.

*This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

– *Joshua 1:8.*

Regenerate Christians, children of God, in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, are desirous, yes, anxious to lead a life that is well pleasing to God. They wish to do good works that are acceptable to God. But in this they must not be guided by their own would-be pious opinion, much less by the commandments of men, but by the Law of God. The Law of God must be the rule guiding their every action. The Law of God should never depart out of their mouths, but they should meditate therein day and night, and seek to follow all its precepts. Then they will be sure of doing what is right, and will always act wisely.

Thus, notwithstanding God knows that man cannot fulfill His Law, He nevertheless has made it a rule for us, His children, which we should follow, and which tells us with what and what kind of works we should serve Him. It is acting presumptuously if we ourselves choose the works with which we want to serve God. God has told us in His Law how we should be, and what we must do and must not do, and these precepts alone we must follow. Indeed, that will give us enough to do as long as we live. The more earnestly we strive to keep God's commandments, the more we shall become aware of how much we still lack, how poorly we have kept the Law, are still keeping it, and, in fact, how little we can keep it.

*PRAYER.* – O Lord, give me Your Holy Spirit, that I may run the way of Your commandments! And be with me on this way, O gracious God, and richly and daily forgive all sins unto me for Jesus' sake. and comfort and strengthen me by the Spirit of grace, that I may ever and again lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for my feet to run in the ways of Your commandments. Amen.

Hymn 341, 1-3.

The man is ever blest  
Who shuns the sinners' ways;  
Among their counsels never stands,  
Nor takes the scorners' place.

But makes the Law of God  
His study and delight,  
Amid the labors of the day,  
And watches of the night.

He like a tree shall thrive,  
With waters near the root;  
Fresh as the leaf, his name shall live;  
His works are heavenly fruit.

THURSDAY.

*Sin is the transgression of the Law. – 1 John 3:4.*

What, properly speaking, is sin? "Sin is the transgression of the Law," says our text. The divine Law tells us what is right. Sin is every transgression of the divine Law, every departure from its rules and precepts, each and every failure to do whatsoever it demands of us, each and everything that is done contrary or in opposition to it.

Mark that well, Christian: sin is every departure from the rule of the divine Law. Since God, the holy God, has told us in His Law how we should be, and what we must do and must not do, every transgression of that Law must be wrong, wickedness, error, sin.

Men often speak of great and of trifling sins, and are not so punctilious as regards the latter. This is wrong. Everything, without exception, that is against God's Law is wrong, is sin, ungodly, impious. But if any one claims something to be a sin which is not forbidden in the Law of God, do not listen to him. Only that is sin which is contrary to God's Law, and nothing else. No one has a right to bind our conscience with man-made laws.

But you will find plenty of sin, many departures from the rule of the divine Law if you will but examine yourself. Take these sins to Christ, that He may forgive them. Strive against them valiantly in the power of the Holy Ghost.

*PRAYER.* – Lord Jesus Christ, I know that I cannot stand before Your divine Law. I am not as I should be; I fail to do what I should; I do not refrain from those things which You have forbidden in Your Law. Free and rid me, I beg You, from the load of my sin, and declare to Your Father that You have rendered satisfaction for me. But also grant me holy courage and endue me with strength of Your Spirit, that I may earnestly and successfully resist sin and serve You in accordance with Your Law. Amen.

Hymn 322, 1. 4.

I LAY my sins on Jesus,  
The spotless Lamb of God;  
He bears them all and frees us  
From the accursed load.  
I bring my guilt to Jesus,  
To wash my crimson stains  
White in His blood most precious,  
Till not a spot remains.

I long to be like Jesus,  
    Meek, loving, lowly, mild;  
I long to be like Jesus,  
    The Father's holy child.  
I long to be with Jesus,  
    Amid the heavenly throng,  
To sing with saints His praises,  
    To learn the angels' song.

#### FRIDAY.

*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. – 1 John 3:8.*

*How did sin enter the world?* This is a question which human reason cannot answer. Our Catechism is right in answering from the Word of God: "By the devil, who first departed from God, and by man, who of his own free will suffered himself to be misled by Satan into sin." So the very first originator of sin is the devil. "The devil sinneth from the beginning," that is to say, he was the first one to sin; with him sin originated.

*How* it came about that a great many of the angels whom God created good fell into sin we know nothing of, nor can we comprehend it. God has not revealed it to us in Scripture. He only says that it was done, and Satan, the prince of the fallen angels, has seduced the first man, and the first man of his own free will suffered himself to be misled. So it came about that also – by *one* man sin entered into the world," into the world where man dwells. (Romans 5:12.) But, as stated above, the devil is the originator of sin. And he that commits sin is of the devil; he is not of God, he is of the devil, begotten of the devil, is the devil's child, like the devil, of the same nature as the devil. This is a hard saying. But it is true, fully true. So says St. John, "the Apostle of love," inspired by the Holy Ghost. Our dear and loving Savior said the same thing to the unbelieving Jews: "Ye are of your father, the devil." (John 8:44.) Since the fall of Adam all men, by nature, are of the devil. There is no difference. Awful!

But thanks be to God: "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8.)

You know this. Through faith in the Son of God you – poor sinner – are a child of God, His beloved child, to whom God forgives all sins, and whom God purifies ever more by His Holy Ghost, and finally, in eternal life, will make like unto Himself, perfectly holy, without sin.

*PRAYER.* – My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Son of God, strong and merciful Helper and Savior, I thank You that You have made me – a child of the devil – You have made me a child of God, and from direst bondage did exalt me to the most blessed liberty, from deepest degradation unto highest honors. Help, O help me, that through faith I may retain this grace and precious gift of Yours, and thus obtain eternal salvation. Amen.

#### Hymn 92, 2. 3.

He saw me ruined in the fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all,  
He saved me from my lost estate –  
His loving-kindness, O how great!

When I was Satan's easy prey,  
And deep in debt and bondage lay,  
He paid His life for my discharge –  
His loving-kindness, O how large!

#### SATURDAY.

*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. – John 3:6.*

By "flesh" is meant the sinful depravity of human nature. And, indeed, human nature is totally and entirely depraved, it is

deprived of the righteousness it had when God first created it, and is inclined to all that is evil. "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing," says the Apostle Paul. (Romans 7:18.) "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," says God Himself. (Genesis 8:21.) So human nature is subject to the wrath of God and to damnation. "We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," says St. Paul.

(Ephesians. 2:3.)

Such total depravity of the whole human nature is not acquired by education or habit or implanted into us in some other way, but is *inherited*. We have inherited it from Adam by virtue of our conception and birth from sinful progenitors. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," says Christ, our Lord. And David writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5.) So sin is most deeply and most firmly connected with our nature. By nature we are flesh. No human power can change that. No human power can bring us into the kingdom of God. This is called *original sin*.

– But "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," says Christ. God can change it. God can bring us into the kingdom of God. He does it through His Holy Spirit, who operates in us through His Word, through the Word of Christ. He creates a new thing within us. He implants faith in Christ within us, and so He brings us into the kingdom of God. And He creates and brings about within us a new life. And He regenerates us, makes us "spirit," spiritual. In consequence of this there is a constant warfare in this life between flesh and spirit. But the spirit is mightier than the flesh. In heaven we shall be all spirit.

*PRAYER.* – I thank You, my God, that You have regenerated me – who by nature am flesh – through Your Word and Holy Spirit, and have made me spirit, so that now I believe in my Savior and find true comfort in Him, but also serve Him with the new powers that You have given me, and confidently hope to obtain eternal life. You have brought me into Your kingdom, O God of mercy. Keep me therein, here in time and thereafter in eternity. Amen.

Hymn 310, 2. 4.

Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay,  
Death brooded darkly o'er me,  
My sin oppressed me night and day,  
Therein my mother bore me;  
Deeper and deeper still I fell,  
Life had become a living hell,  
So firmly sin possessed me.

Then God beheld my wretched state  
With deep commiseration;  
He thought upon His mercy seat,  
And willed my soul's salvation;  
He turned to me a Father's heart –  
Not small the cost! – to heal my smart,  
He gave His best and dearest.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).  
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