

"Outlaws and In-laws"

Text: 1 Corinthians 9:15-23

May the love of God the Father fill you with wonder, may the sacrifice of God the Son fill you with gratitude, and may the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit in your heart fill you with faith, hope, and love. Amen.

Dear Fellow Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ:

Looking back, one of the simple joys of fatherhood for many dads was wrestling with our wee-ones on the living room floor. I'm sure the psychologists would give us a long and detailed explanation as to how or why this sort of activity fulfilled some deep, primal, animal-like instinct in both a father and his offspring – which is precisely why we never intend to ask one about it. For us it was great fun, so we wrestled – or they tried to ride the wild horse, capture the lion, or tackle the elephant. The name of the game changed, but it was always mostly the same.

For some reason it stops being as much fun when our sons started winning. Go figure. (The psychologists would undoubtedly have something to say about that too.) As our sons get to be taller than we (Pastor Roehl says that that happened to him when Andrew was in the second grade) we dads discover the secret weapon that allows us to dominate our children far longer than would otherwise be possible: gravity. Maybe you remember when your own dad unleashed this incredible secret weapon upon you. Every time you would test your new "man-muscles" on him, he would grab hold, employ the secret weapon, and the immutable Laws of Science and nature would take over.

It was always there, too, that silent, latent power just waiting to be deployed. Dads know exactly what I am talking about here. With every bratwurst, with every bowl of ice cream, with every illicit midnight snack our power grows. Our children may grow ever stronger, but we have gravity and we have science.

All of this great fun, however, turned very serious when you realized that this tactic is also known to Satan. His secret weapon against even the strongest child of God is gravity, but gravity of a different sort. The devil doesn't use pounds; he uses sin – sins like laziness, greed, lust, and pride. These sins cling to our society; they cling to our old Adam. The temptations are always there. Our forefathers recognized them and did a better job of resisting them than we do today. Satan's strategy here is clear: keep the temptations out there and patiently allow those temptations to do their deadly work. He knows that man's natural tendency is always toward slothfulness, hedonism (love of pleasure), and narcissism (love of self), and the devil is as patient as he is evil.

His strategy certainly seems to be working – so much so that we now find ourselves in a society that in many areas can really no longer tell right from wrong. In fact our national morality today is so out of sync and disjointed that we call wrong, right and right, wrong.

But our God did not leave us unprotected. He did not abandon us to drift like rudderless ships, powerless to resist the winds of change and perversion that dominate our society. He left us with a written record of his will: the law. As Christians we are well aware that we are not saved by our obedience to that law, but, just as certainly, as Christians we know that obedience to that moral law is still the will of our Creator. God's law is also, therefore, the delight of that new man that now lives within each Christian. Our text for this morning deals, in part, with this very subject – and more. Our text is found in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, the 9th Chapter:

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. ¹⁹ ¶ For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

So far the pure, holy, inspired Words of our Heavenly Father. We acknowledge, dear Holy Spirit, that you have promised to work in our hearts through these your words. We pray then that you would do just that – work powerfully in our hearts this morning as we hear and study these your words. To this end we pray, "Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!" Amen.

Certain topics seem to appear again and again throughout our Synod as the subject of discussions, conference papers, and convention essays. This ought to tell us that these questions, these challenges, will always be with us. Experience tells us that the temptation is always present to look at what has been written and taught before, and to just accept all such as our answers today. Certainly the past helps us to gain direction for the future – much like the rear sight on a rifle. But there also has to be front sight. That means that each generation needs to rediscover God's truth for itself.

We should probably point out here that this is a far cry from what secular humanists tell the youth of our society, which is that they must discover their own truth. The main problem there is that God's Word (the Bible) is excluded as source material. Obviously when those are the rules, the process is doomed from the very start. "Truth," according to our secular society, has to come from within. Our present society is the perfect example of what happens when man removes God from the decision-making process and replaces his will with man's emotions, feelings, inclinations, tendencies. Then you get a society where some literally shake with rage when an animal is killed for food, but yawn apathetically when a seven month old baby is taken from his mother's womb and dismembered.

One of those oft-recurring topics that needs to be studied and restudied by every single generation is the understanding and balance between legalism and antinomianism. Don't be frightened by the terms. "Legalism" carries a variety of definitions, but it refers, in general, to using the law in ways that God never intended it to be used. "Antinomianism" (literally: "against or opposed to the law") refers to a failure to use the law as God intended. In short then, legalism is misusing the law among Christians while antinomianism is the belief that among Christians the law has no use or benefit of any kind. The sermon title this morning is an attempt to capture and encapsulate this difference with "Outlaws and In-laws." [Note: Make sure you have these definitions straight in your mind before you go on. They are critical to rightly understanding this whole topic.]

This study is worthy of our time, in part because it is essential to a correct understanding of the gospel and the Christian faith. It ought not surprise us that the devil struggles mightily to steer God's Church into one ditch or the other. While legalism and antinomianism will both always be present at any given time, a timeline of Church History reveals something of a pendulum of error in each generation. Some generations demonstrate a greater tendency toward legalism, others to antinomianism. Where do you think we are today?

Again, while legalism is also a clear and present danger today, the Christian Church, as well as our entire society, is awash in antinomianism in lawlessness. Consider this chilling quote from Herbert Chilstrom, the former president of a large, liberal church body:

The prescriptive method [of using Scripture] is based on the assumption that Scripture is used to discover final answers to questions. Thus, when confronted with a particularly thorny issue, one could go to Scripture, study carefully every text that addresses the issue and come up with a conclusive response. Scripture as "norm" means Scripture as answer book. I suspect that most of us (in our church) come at these matters from the descriptive method. We see Scripture as no less important....But for us "norm" means "guide" rather than "rule." Having informed ourselves of

what Scripture has to say, we go on to ask questions about other ways in which God may be trying to enlighten us.

Boiled down into plain English: Many Christians today feel perfectly justified in tossing out what God says and following a course of their own choosing – which is probably the clearest definition of antinomianism that you will find today. Solomon spoke of this subtle yet diabolic wickedness in Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

Tossing out God's law and substituting man's emotion, compassion, or natural inclination is the quickest way I can imagine to create a church that promotes lesbian pastors, openly homosexual bishops, pre-marital cohabitation, same sex marriage, and a low view of Holy Scripture as a human book that contains both truth and error.

Nor are the problems that result from dumping God's law restricted to such high-profile sins. Pastors create countless spiritual problems whenever they fail to label sin as sin. They most often do so because they fear offending or alienating members caught up in those sins. Church members add to the problem when they no longer lovingly admonish one another because they don't want to meddle, they want to be seen as tolerant and enlightened, or because they worry that hard feelings may result (as if eternity in hell is preferable to potential hard feelings here on earth). Churches add to the problem when they no longer discipline obviously impenitent members, and opt instead to do additional harm by creating and perpetuating the illusion that all is well, and that sin is no longer really sinful.

Clearly the greater danger in our society is the "outlaw" (those who abandon God's law) but what exactly does our text for this morning have to say about any of this? [Take a moment here to reread the text.]

Paul is here telling us that Christians, in a way, are both outlaws and in-laws. We are "outlaws" in the sense that we have been freed from the condemnation of the law. In other words, since we know that we are saved not by works, but by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the demands of the law no longer threaten or terrify us. We are outlaws in the sense that we stand outside of the condemnation of the law through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered the punishment for our lawlessness as our substitute. In that way the Christian man has an incredible freedom that no other human being can enjoy.

Paul then goes on to tell how he routinely reaches out to others by becoming an "in-law" by adopting the non-sinful laws or customs of those he is trying to reach with the gospel: For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the

Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law."

The "law" referred to here by Paul is the ceremonial law, which means that Paul would adapt his behavior so as not to prevent the Jews from hearing the gospel. That means Paul would not eat anything unclean, for example, when in the company of Jews. He would routinely make sure he was ceremonially clean before he entered the temple, made it known that he was circumcised, and the like. He was not under obligation to do these things, but he observed them for the sake of the gospel. So too you and I today might not serve pork if we invited a Jewish family to dinner so as not to prevent them from hearing our gospel witness.

Yet note well here that Paul nowhere says that the moral law is either optional or obsolete. The moral law is that part of God's will that extends to all people of every generation, both Old and New Testament. In other words, it was God's will in the day of Moses that one man should not murder, rob, or harm another. That is still God's will for us today. We know this to be true because Jesus repeated these laws in the New Testament, therefore when it comes to God's moral laws, man is never free to pick and choose which he will obey

To this the "outlaws" (the Antinomians) cry foul. "How," they ask, "can you say that Christians are free from the threats of the law (any laws, all laws) but are still obligated to obey the moral law? If Christians are truly free, they ought to be free to do whatever they please." Obviously anyone who makes such a claim does not understand the Christian or the Christian faith. They don't recognize that a new man is created in the heart of every Christian. The will of this new man is in perfect agreement with God's will. That means that God never has to force his will upon his true children. When the Christian has "put on" the new man, he willingly ransacks the Scriptures because the greatest delight of the new man is to walk in harmony with the will of his God. True Christians keep God's law not in fear, but in loving obedience.

How extraordinarily evil then for anyone who calls himself a Christian today to pretend that the new man could ever or would ever choose any course of action that he knows to be contrary to God's will, revealed in the moral law. Why would any Christian want to do away with God's revealed will for our lives? His law holds no terror or condemnation for us, for we are saved by grace through faith. Jesus has freed us from the curse of any and every law, having become a curse for us. That moral law, on the contrary, is a precious and holy guide throughout all generations. Even while you place your full and complete trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation, do not allow our present, evil generation to rob you of your love and reverence for God's ongoing will for your life and conduct. While you and I are no longer under the threat of that

law, we certainly desire to walk blamelessly in it. God be praised both for the gospel that saves us and for the love for his law that is living and active now in our hearts. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Job 7:1-7** "Has not man a hard service on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired hand? ² Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like a hired hand who looks for his wages, ³ so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. ⁴ When I lie down I say, 'When shall I arise?' But the night is long, and I am full of tossing till the dawn. ⁵ My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt; my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh. ⁶ My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and come to their end without hope. ⁷ "Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good.

^{ESV} **Mark 1:29-35** And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹ And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. ³² ¶ That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. ³⁵ ¶ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

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The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – February 8, 2015

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 54 (Verses 1-2) (Red Hymnal)

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Job 7:1-7) The words of our Old Testament Lesson would be thoroughly depressing if we did not know the rest of Job's story – how God restored his health and wealth, and he once again knew joy and comfort. What we then take from this lesson is the fact that God's children will see dark days. We ought not, however, doubt God's continuing love during those difficult times.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 38 (Supplement page 39)

The New Testament Lesson: (Mark 1:29-35) Many Christians have wondered – often aloud – why God does not seem to perform obvious, visible miracles today like He did in Jesus' day. Yet we are reminded that miracles were not an end in themselves. While they demonstrated God's love, they served to verify that Jesus was who and what He said He was. Note also how Jesus recognized the need for prayer – even if it required rising early to make time.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn - 295 (Verses 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"The Law of God Is Good and Wise"

The Sermon – Text: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Outlaws and In-laws"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn - 295 (Verses 5-6) (Red Hymnal)

"The Law of God Is Good and Wise"

The Offering

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -#54- (Verse 3) (Red Hymnal)

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance - Sunday (30) Average (50)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School (No Bible Class)
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Mid-Week Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time

CLC News – Pastor David Pfeiffer has returned the call to Redemption of Lynnwood, WA. St. Desirae Naumann has accepted the call to St. John's Lutheran School, Clarkston WA. Candice Ohlmann Grace has accepted the call to Grace Lutheran School of Valentine, NE Sara Pfeiffer has returned the call to Gethsemane Lutheran School of Spokane, WA. Calvary of Marquette has called Pastor Michael Gurath.

Care Packages – Care packages for our out-of-town students will be mailed this week. Please bring whatever items you want to include as soon as possible. See Cindy for more details.

Pastor Out of Town – Pastor Roehl is attending meetings in Board meetings in Minneapolis this weekend. He can be reached anytime by email, text, or cell (701) 425-5483.

Church Council Notes – General Fund had a negative balance of \$1,845 at the end of January. The computer in the sacristy needed to be updated, cost not to exceed \$250. Due to a trip/fall hazard, the padded mats in the kitchen have been replaced. Pastor Del Maas, Mapleton, ND has agreed to serve as our 2015 Mission Festival speaker. The Council will continue to review new hymnals. Next meeting scheduled for March 15.