

## **Christ is Higher Than Moses: His Gospel Trumps the Law**

Hebrews 3:1-6, Sunday after Christmas  
December 28, 2008

Beloved of the Lord.....Probably all of you know, that in many card games, there is power card, or even a suit that beats all others which we call trump. If we play the game well, we like to surprise our opponent and beat his hand with our trump card. The trump card holds the real power, and all other cards are worthless in its face. In our text today two individuals, or two suits are compared. In the one hand there is Moses, a faithful servant of God, in the other there is Christ. Christ was not only a faithful servant of God, but He as a Son also Lord over the whole house. Now, even though the soul of every man is precious in God's sight, many in life live their life as if it is just a game. They don't know the outcome of their life and yet they play as if there is nothing to lose. Some play the hand or suit of Moses, which is to trust that God will take to heaven those who keep His commandments. Others place no faith in Moses nor his laws, but their confidence lies in Christ, the Son of God. Spiritually speaking, Christ is their trump card. His works, His merits, His Gospel always wins over those the law condemns. Today then let us see how Christ is always higher than Moses, His Gospel always trumps the law.

I. Moses was an inferior servant in God's house. In our text today we see the Hebrews, the Jewish Christians of Palestine, were in grave danger of falling away from Christ and returning to Judaism. The devil employed two forces at work to overthrow their faith. 1) They were enduring persecution from their fellow Jews. Life was hard. They were suffering. 2) The ancient Jewish forms of worship were still occurring in the Temple. Thus daily they could see the outward splendor of their former church, and also they could see the many works the Jews did to please their god. That is why you find in our text today the frequent reference to Moses. Moses was then and still is today the great prophet of the Jews, the great keeper of God's laws. God even gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. Primarily the Jews uphold Moses simply because they view him as a model Jew, a keeper of God's Ten Commandments, one who is justified in the sight of God, by his mighty works and deeds. And the Bible does say, "Moses was faithful in all his house."

While the Scriptures do indeed give Moses a special place of honor, for he was a faithful servant in God's house, Moses was yet a SERVANT IN GOD'S House - and the servant is not above his Master. Moreover, who is greater, the man who builds a house, or the Creator who built all things? Though Moses was a builder, Christ is Lord. The Lord used Moses to edify and lead the people with God's Word. Moreover we should not overlook the faithfulness in the testimony of Moses. The Bible says, "Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of

those things which were to be spoken after." This means Moses faithfully preached that a Prophet, a Brother would be raised up from the midst of them, namely Christ the Messiah would be born a Jew, and He would come to save all men. Moses therefore preached both law and Gospel. However, Moses' own service record was not without fault. He slew, murdered an Egyptian and buried him in the sand when no one but God was looking. He also resisted God's call to be a prophet, and instead of speaking to the Rock for water, he struck the rock, his human reason being a crutch. Moses' sin was so grievous in God's sight he was not permitted to enter the promised land, but only see it from afar. His sin, his evil work kept him out of the promised land. This truth itself teaches us that no man is able to enter into heaven by the works of the law. Dead works proceeding from a dead faith lead only to the second death which is everlasting.

One of the main lessons in our text today then is that we must be careful not to forsake Christ who is far higher than Moses, by falling away from salvation by grace to salvation by works. For just as the Hebrews, the Jewish Christians of Palestine were in danger of being seduced by the outward beauty of their former church, so we may look upon the various outward works and deeds of those churches surrounding us and likewise be seduced into works-righteousness. Even we at Good Shepherd are sandwiched between the beautiful Lord of Life Lutheran church to the East, and the St. Thomas Catholic church to the west. Both churches indeed have their outward beauty, much like the Jewish Temple of Jerusalem. Hence when the question is asked, which church is the true church I should attend, we cannot go by outward appearance, for the devil himself can appear as an angel of light yet he preaches another gospel (Gal. 1:8). No, the crucial thing, the heart of it all is this: is the church, is its minister, is the congregation publicly teaching, declaring, and professing the pure and unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ, that a man is justified by grace, without the deeds of the law? Is the Gospel at the heart of their teachings, or is their heart the law?

II. Christ is a superior Son, Lord over His own house. This now brings us again to the game of cards, and the two suits of Moses and Christ. Which suit will we trust in, Moses or Christ, the law or the Gospel? The Bible says, "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Clearly our text teaches us Christ is higher than Moses, and the Gospel always trumps the law. Christ is both our Apostle and High Priest. These terms indicate His office and work to save us from our sins. An apostle is a delegate, an ambassador of the Gospel who brings good news wherever He goes. In our world today Christ our Apostle works through His Means of Grace. With our ears we hear our Apostle say, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." With our eyes we see tokens of His grace in the water, the bread and wine. In, with, and under these visible means God washes us clean of all sins and feeds us heavenly forgiveness. As our Apostle

through the Gospel Word, Christ still reveals Himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Christ is also our High Priest, "who was faithful to Him that appointed Him." Our High Priest kept and fulfilled God's Law perfectly in our stead. He was "made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law." As the Son of Man, Christ would fulfill the law in the stead of man, as the Son of God He as One would stand in the place of all. In our place Jesus kept perfectly all the Father commanded. The Son pleased the Father so perfectly the Father said of the Son, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." We then who trust in Christ's Gospel and not Moses' law, find endless comfort that He is our Priest who fulfilled God's law. If we trust in His works, you might say in His "holy suit" of righteousness, we too become beloved sons and daughters of God by faith. We especially rejoice that He resisted and overcame all temptation for our sake. He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities.....was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Here too is endless comfort for sinners who know well we have yielded to temptation. What is your greatest sin dear Christian? What did you shamefully yield to in the past? Well, Christ did not once yield to that sin. And since you are justified by grace through faith, this means in the sight of God through Christ, you never yielded, you never gave in to that temptation. The just shall live by faith. Moreover lets not forget, when God's Spirit lives in our heart by faith, Christ helps us to overcome temptation. Christ Himself "suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." This means dear Christian you are not alone in your battle against temptation, for God helps His children to overcome. If God's Spirit didn't live within you, you would find no struggle in your soul against sin. But now you struggle and try to resist. Such testifies that God's own Spirit does indeed live within. Therefore rejoice in Christ your High Priest. He overcame all temptation for your sake.

Above all things we should remember that the job of a High Priest is to "make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Since Christ was and is yet God and man in one, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" He did not have to continually offer sacrifices like the priests of the Old Testament. The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world needed only offer up Himself once upon the altar of the cross. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." No sinner is exempt from the benefits of His sacrifice but they must be received by faith. When it comes to atonement, God does not look at the works of any single sinner, but He looks only upon the Holy blood of His Son, and He is satisfied. Therefore "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous;" His blood continually pleads our cause in heaven, so God cannot nor will not condemn those who trust in the merits of Christ.

III. The Gospel of Christ always Trumps the Law. That is why dear Christian, the Gospel of Christ always trumps the

law of Moses. The law cannot save but only brings God's curse upon every man. Yet Christ came to redeem all such men from sin and by His blood He declares all men righteous! While God is indeed a consuming fire, the fire, the anger in God's heart against our sin was snuffed out and extinguished by the innocent blood of God's only begotten Son. Indeed God is now so perfectly reconciled with a world of sinners, that God holds nothing but thoughts of love and peace in His heart toward you dear sinner. That is also why God the Father is so well pleased with God the Son, and that is why the Son is made Lord over the whole house.

You dear friend are a part of God's own house, if you know the Gospel of Christ always trumps and triumphs over the law. In God's house, the Gospel always has the last word, and that last word is this, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace." We then are members of God's house "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." If you utterly despise any righteousness of your own and instead trust only that Christ is your strong suit, Christ is your righteousness, your trump card, you'll take every trick, you'll win ever game, and you will reap the treasures of everlasting life. If Christ is your trump card, your very enemies at the table, namely sin, death and the devil, will flee before you. Those who trust in their works have only losing hands. Therefore hold fast, continue in the Gospel faith of Jesus Christ, and you will triumph and win every time. Amen.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever. Amen.

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