

Purified To Serve The Living God
Hebrews 9:11-15

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

How many of you here are the forgiven children of God? How many of you have been redeemed, that is, bought with a price? Yes, you have been redeemed, purchase with the price paid by the very Son of God.

You know Luther's explanation to the second article of the creed which explains what you have been redeemed from.

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord,

who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death,

that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.

Luther's explanation intimately explains how our text ties to our lives. If we are in Christ, we have been purified to serve the living God in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. You and I are to live differently in the world. You and I are to live as those who know we are holy, who know that we have been purified in Christ. We are to live lives that speak volumes of difference to those who do not know Christ.

Yes, dear friends, by birth you are born under the Law. You come into this world in human flesh that must answer to God according to the first covenant, the covenant that was given on tablets of stone. All mankind will be held accountable to God for their obedience to that first covenant, or their disobedience, as the case may be.

Some people may think this unfair. It is not for it is plainly evident that all men have the law of God written on their hearts. No matter what culture you visit, there are moral laws that have always been a constant from culture to culture, and age to age. Those moral laws are the same, no matter the culture – no matter the era.

However, even though written on the hearts of every man, all sin against that law. We ignore our conscience, sinning against it and therefore, against God. I almost hate to say this, but you and I compound the problem.

How? You not only have the law written on your heart, but you also know the written law – you know what God has commanded. And furthermore, you know how Christ has defined the Law, that it is not simply our actions, but our thoughts are often violations of God's righteous requirements. We know specifically what God requires of us, and therefore all the areas we fall short.

That is part of our problem. We know what we should do, but we do not do it. We know what we should not be doing, but we do these things in spite of that knowledge. That is why we confess that we sin against God's Law by what we have done and by what we have left undone. These are what our text calls dead works – works which reign as death in our bodies, for that is the wages they have earned along with the wrath of God.

Even though we may know the law, even though our conscience accuses us, it does not mean that we can keep it. Our conscience does leave us knowing that we are dead in trespasses and sin. We know how we have failed, and we want to clear our consciences – we want to purify ourselves before God – we want to appease His wrath against our sin and live.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and

more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

Christ, however, is not from creation. He is the perfect man, the one born not of human flesh alone, but conceived by the Holy Spirit. Upon the cross, Christ entered the holy place with His blood shed upon the cross and purchased redemption from sin for all mankind of every age. His perfect obedience was sacrificed to appease God's wrath – to purchase forgiveness for those under the law.

At His death, when His side was pierced, blood and water flowed, a showering flood that courses from Christ's veins over every age and time. In His death, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them – that buys them back – from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

You have been sprinkled with the blood of that perfect sacrifice, the waters of your baptism flowing from His riven side. You are purified from dead works, forgiveness cleansing you of sin and granting your conscience peace from the terrors of the Law. Purified in the blood of Christ, you are given a new life – a life lived in Christ. You are called to be holy Children of God in Christ Jesus.

You are purified from dead works when the blood of Christ is applied to your sins and conscience by the pronouncement of the absolution. In the word Christ commanded to be proclaimed to repentant sinners, you are made holy, that is, you are sanctified as the redeemed children of God.

When you eat and drink at Christ's Table, His blood once shed for you fills you, purifying you from your dead works as you are filled with Christ. His perfect life cleanses you and makes you new again. Christ comes to you; He makes His dwelling within you. In Christ you are a new creature – pure and holy.

Today is Judica Sunday, it is the Sunday where we plead with God to judge us by pleading our cause. It is the blood of Christ which pleads our cause before God – His blood which appeases the wrath against our sin. It is Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, in order to purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Dearly beloved of God, live in Christ. Know that it is He who lives in you, who has cleansed you and made you His own. You are purified from dead works and now live in the peace of God that is yours in Christ Jesus.

In this peace, you live a new life. Now you are purified to serve the living God! You are made holy to live new, holy lives, the lives Christ lives in and through you. In Christ you live in love toward God and peace toward one another. This is your new life, purified to serve the living God – now and forevermore. Amen.