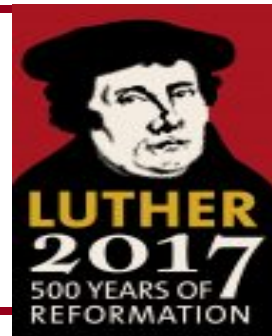


# *Legal Metaphors of the Gospel*

**Romans 3:9-28 Luke 11:33-36**

**September 3, 2017**

Pastor Dave Bolte



Do you ever watch those **TV courtroom drama shows**? Some of you might remember Perry Mason or Matlock. Since then there are many others: LA Law, Boston Legal, and of course, all the Law and Order spin-offs! One internet list had over 50 TV shows! ***It seems that we are interested in and familiar with the legal process!***

As we studied the book of Romans this summer, we saw that St. Paul used legal, courtroom word pictures and metaphors as the chief way to teach the Gospel to us.

Legal, courtroom word pictures highlight that salvation is “**outside of us,**” that salvation is **objective** and based on what God does, not subjective and based on our own good works. Forgiveness of sins is pronounced over you as a **legal verdict** by God Himself, and no one can change that!

To fully understand the courtroom word pictures of the Gospel, you first must understand how you stand before God. The Ten Commandments prepare you for the legal metaphors of the Gospel. **The Ten Commandments are the “Law” of God.** Every time you sin, you are a “**law breaker**”. You have **broken the Law** when you sin against God or sin against your neighbor. It’s as if the Ten Commandments “**arrest you**” and bring you into God’s courtroom and **accuse** you of sin. There are no  fines  and there is no  jail time ; the only sentence for breaking God’s Law is **death**. A holy God does not tolerate sin in His presence. He completely consumes and destroys all evil. ***The soul that sins is the soul that shall die***  
Ezekiel 18:4 God’s Ten Commandments are serious. They are the Law for every single human being; each and every person is measured against the Ten Commandments and held accountable to God.

And when we are measured against God’s Commandments, we all fall short. We have **no excuse**. We are caught **red-handed in sin**. We are **guilty as charged**.

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, so that **every mouth may be silenced** and the whole world **held accountable to God**.  
ROMANS 3:19

**But this is exactly where the LEGAL, COURTROOM WORD PICTURES of the Gospel come alive!**

**THE FIRST WORD PICTURE** is that the Lord Jesus Christ steps in as your **“defense attorney”**. He speaks on your behalf!

Who then is the one who condemns? **NO ONE**. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is **at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us**. ROMANS 8:34

This **intercession** of Jesus is part of the **courtroom word picture!** He is your **advocate** with the Judge, like your **“defense attorney”** <sup>1 JOHN 2:1-2</sup>. Jesus speaks up for you and reminds the Father that His own death on the cross paid for your sins. In His resurrection, you are set free from sin and its punishment. His **perfect life** and **sacrificial death** make Him the righteous One who **defends** you. His **perfect life** and **sacrificial death** is “credited” to you like a bank transaction and God declares you righteous. Jesus speaks on your behalf in God’s “courtroom.”

**THE SECOND LEGAL WORD PICTURE** follows closely after this. Because Jesus speaks on your behalf, God the Judge declares the legal verdict of **“not guilty!”** over you! This is the meaning of the word **“righteous”** and **“justified”**: salvation is a **legal verdict** in God’s courtroom where you are declared **“not guilty!”** of your sins! You are **justified by faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ! You have been pronounced **“righteous”** in God’s courtroom. You are **absolved** of all sin. You are **declared forgiven** of all your sins. This legal verdict is repeated for you to hear and believe each week in absolution.

**A THIRD LEGAL WORD PICTURE** follows closely after this: Because Jesus is your **advocate**, like a “**defense attorney**”, and because you are declared **righteous** and **justified**, there is now “**NO CONDEMNATION**” against you! No accusation of sin can be brought against you in God’s presence, not now, not when you die, and not on Judgement Day! Every single accusation of sin against you fell on Jesus when He died on the cross in your place. There is no condemnation and no accusation of sin against you.

**These are powerful WORD PICTURES to help you understand and believe the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!**

These legal word pictures are the **chief way** that salvation is taught in the Book of Romans! The Gospel is all **God’s work** on your behalf; it is **objective**, outside of you. Eternal salvation is **based on Christ** and His work of salvation on your behalf.

There are several implications of these legal word pictures that are important to know.

The first is that these word pictures give you **assurance**. You can be **absolutely confident** that your sins are forgiven and that you have peace with God. These legal metaphors teach you about what God has done for you --- they are not dependent on your feelings or circumstances; nor are they waiting for you to “do your part”.

- **The Savior has died and rose from the dead on the third day.**
- **The work of salvation is complete and it is finished.**
- **The divine Judge has pronounced the verdict of “not guilty!” over you.**
- **Your salvation is guaranteed.**

**Let these legal metaphors give you rock solid, unshakable assurance of salvation.**

A second thing to note is historical. These legal metaphors, especially the words **righteousness** and **justification** are what we are celebrating this year in the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Teaching the truth about **righteousness** and **justification** is what the Lutheran faith is all about! **The reason why Martin Luther broke from the Roman Catholic Church was because they had turned righteousness and justification into the works of**

**men rather than the legal verdict of God!** They had taken these words out of context and turned them upside down. **They were leading people away from Christ rather than to Him! They left people in fear and doubt of their salvation rather than with peace and assurance.** In a nutshell, the Lutheran Reformation is all about teaching these legal metaphors **accurately**: Teaching the truth about **righteousness** and **justification** is what the Lutheran faith is all about! As Lutheran Christians, we say that **righteousness and justification by faith in Christ alone is the first and chief doctrine**; the Christian Church either stands or falls on these legal metaphors. **The reason why Martin Luther broke from the Roman Catholic Church was because they had turned righteousness and justification into the works of men rather than the legal verdict of God!** Once Martin Luther realized that, the Reformation began.

**Finally, one other thing.** These legal word pictures of the Gospel are an easy way for you to share your faith with others. People love courtroom dramas; they can easily understand the word picture, and it helps them understand the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The legal metaphors of the Gospel are powerful ways to share your faith with others. They will help you stay focused on Christ and His work when you share your faith.

**Parents, this has an especially sharp edge for you.** As a mother or a father, the number one thing you teach your children about is Christ. ***What good is it if you teach them everything else in the world, but they never learn to trust Christ and they die in their sins?*** Use these legal word pictures to help your kids learn about Jesus and His forgiveness. These word pictures of the Gospel are the power of God which brings salvation!

**Righteousness**

**Justification**

**the “Not guilty!” verdict**

**no condemnation**

**Jesus’ intercession on your behalf like a defense attorney**

all of these are part of the

**LEGAL METAPHORS OF THE GOSPEL.**

These are images to help you understand the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus the Lord! The legal metaphors of the Gospel give you **assurance in the faith**; and they give you a **bold witness to the world!** Amen!