



The Law and the Gospel are the two great doctrines of the Bible which must be sharply distinguished in order to have a correct understanding of the Bible (2017 Catechism Q.10, pg. 49). “The Law teaches what we are to do and not to do; the Gospel teaches what God has done, and still does, in Jesus, for our salvation” (2017 Catechism pg. 49). God's Law; the Ten Commandments instructs us to follow His Word. At the same time, the commandments tell us what not to do. “You shall have no other gods” is God's command to worship no false god, while at the same time the instruction is clear; you are to worship the One true God. The 7th Commandment makes clear you shall not steal anything that does not belong to you. The 7th Commandment also instructs you to help protect and improve your neighbors property. These are a few examples of what the Law means by teaching “what we are to do and what we are not to do according to God's Law.

The Gospel teaches what God has done, and still does, in Jesus, for our salvation. The Gospel is what God does for us through Christ and comes from Christ and His work of Redemption by God's grace. By doing good works, we do not merit favor with God nor earn salvation even in the smallest measure. **Romans 3:20, “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the Law comes knowledge of sin.”**

God's Law shows us our sin and His wrath at us for our sin. Impenitent sinners are to be terrified by their sin which the Law shows them as a mirror reveals the truth of who we are. By the Law, sinners are brought to the knowledge of their sins and to repentance.

The Gospel reveals to us the grace and favor of God for us in Christ offering us the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation which comes from Christ and His cross alone. The Gospel gives Christ to the troubled conscience burdened by sin, convicted before God by the Law. Through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel the sinner sees Jesus as Savior confessing as did King David, **“I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die” (2 Samuel 12:13).** The Law of God does convict and condemn but the Gospel delivers Christ and forgiveness, God's grace the assurance of life everlasting.

The Catechism continues on the proper distinction between Law and Gospel by saying: “The Law must be proclaimed to all people, but especially to sinners who refuse to repent; the Gospel must be proclaimed to sinners who are troubled by their sins.” Law and Gospel properly proclaimed, preached and applied brings the truth of what God does for sinners who remain in their lost condition until rescued by God's grace through Christ the Savior. The Gospel gives comfort to those who sorrow because of sin giving them forgiveness, the love of God given in Christ's death and resurrection.

Some people make the claim that the preaching of the Law is too harsh. Some say the Church is too judgmental and quick to accuse people showing no compassion. Through God's Law, the Holy Spirit convicts the sinner of sin and leads to repentance so that through the Gospel (Means of Grace) The Holy Spirit brings the sinner to faith in Christ and then makes the person a member of the Church. This is the mercy of God to show us our sin that we would know the truth and to bring us to repentance, then faith in Christ. **“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” St. John 6:63.** Then in **Romans 1:16** we hear Paul say these words, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”**

God the Holy Spirit desires to create faith in everyone and bring them to be under the gracious lordship of Jesus. **“The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” 2 Peter 3:9.** The way of Christian love is to speak the truth to sinners who need to hear. God desires to save people that's why the Law reveals sinners for who they are to see the need for Christ the Savior.

Therefore, while some may think the Church too harsh, the truth is, God is merciful in revealing the truth of our sinful nature so that we are brought to repentance. The Holy Spirit does His work bringing us into fellowship with Christ as we are nourished by Word and Sacrament unto life everlasting. All this is given through God's love and mercy for us in Christ as the Gospel does its work in Jesus.

**The Gospel shows the Father's grace,
Who sent His Son to save our race,
Proclaims how Jesus lived and died
That we might thus be justified.**

LSB 580 stanza 1 “The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace”