

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Sunday Morning Bible Class

Formula of Concord Series

Article 5 – Law and Gospel

The Question at Issue:

- A) The preaching of the Holy Gospel is, strictly speaking, only a preaching of grace which proclaims the forgiveness of sins.
- B) The preaching of the Holy Gospel is also a preaching of repentance and reproof that condemns unbelief, since unbelief is condemned not in the law but wholly in the Gospel.

Why It Matters

- 1) Whenever the true nature of the law or the gospel is obscured, mankind will, by default, learn to take comfort in the law and in his own actions, and Christ is diminished.
- 2) Whenever we fail to properly distinguish between law and gospel, Christ is turned into another law-giver and the true nature of the gospel and our salvation is lost.
- 3) Whenever Christians are directed to the law for their comfort, their true comfort is lost and the doors are open to the damning falsehood of work-righteousness.

What the Bible Teaches

^{NASB} **2 Timothy 2:15** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

^{NKJ} **2 Timothy 2:15** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

^{NKJ} **Mark 1:15** and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

^{NKJ} **Acts 20:24** "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

^{NKJ} **Romans 3:27** ¶ Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

^{NKJ} **Romans 7:14** For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

^{NKJ} **Romans 1:16-18** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." ¹⁸ ¶ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

- 1) The distinction between law and gospel must be taught with great diligence and care so that souls are never confused as to the path to heaven.
- 2) The law is a divine doctrine which teaches what is right and God-pleasing and which condemns everything that is sinful and contrary to God's will.
- 3) Everything that condemns sin is and belongs to the proclamation of the law.
- 4) The gospel teaches what a man who has not kept the law and is condemned by it should believe; namely, that Christ has paid for his sins and won for him forgiveness.
- 5) The word "gospel" however is not used in only one sense in Scripture. At times it refers to the entire body of Christ's teachings, in which case it is correct to say that the Gospel is a proclamation both of repentance and forgiveness of sins.
- 6) Whenever law and gospel are opposed to each other, as when Moses is spoken of as a teacher of the law in contrast to Christ as a preacher of the gospel, then the gospel, in that context, is never a proclamation of contrition and reproof but a message of comfort and forgiveness in the satisfaction for sin won for us by Jesus Christ.
- 7) Unregenerate souls who hear only the law have veil that covers their hearts. They are not able to learn the true nature of their sin from hearing only law. In that sense the proclamation of the suffering and death of Christ – the very Son of God – is an earnest and terrifying preaching of God's wrath over against sin and a true indication of the terror of sin. The condemnation of Christ teaches man, for the first time, the true nature of his sin and the great things that God demands of us in the law.
- 8) As long as the preaching of the suffering and death of Christ proclaims the wrath of God and terrifies souls, it is not, strictly speaking, the preaching of the gospel but of the law.

What the Bible Rejects

- 1) That the gospel, strictly speaking, is a proclamation of conviction and reproof and not exclusively a proclamation of grace.
- 2) That both the law and the gospel can accomplish the same things.
- 3) The notion that the law and the gospel should ever be mixed or confused.