

Law and Gospel (With a view towards the Parables)

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<http://www.bowdoin.edu/~images/graphics/023-Bible&Cross.jpg>

Let's begin by exploring common associations of "law" and "Gospel".

- What do you think of when you think of "law"?
- What do you think of when you think of "Gospel"?
- There is a necessary distinction between "law" and "Gospel".



2

The distinction is a biblical one, identified by four significant figures.

- Paul (d. A.D. 62-65)
2 Corinthians 3:6
"the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life"



<http://www.geocities.com/alcokim688/TheApostlePaul.jpg>

- Augustine of Hippo (354-430)
On the Spirit and the Letter
"I beg you to observe how [Paul] speaks of the letter that killeth, and contrasts therewith the spirit that giveth life."



<http://www.biblio.org/wm/paint/auth/augustine1.jpg>

3

The distinction is a biblical one, identified by four significant figures.

- Martin Luther (1483-1546)
Lectures on Romans (1516)
"The Law shows up sin and makes man guilty and sick; indeed proves him worthy of being damned ... The Gospel offers grace and remits sin and cures the sickness unto salvation."
- C. F. W. Walther (1811-1887)
The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel (1884-1885)
"The doctrinal contents of the entire Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testament, are made up of two doctrines differing fundamentally from each other, viz., the Law and the Gospel."



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Walther_cfw_young.jpg

The law-Gospel distinction is critical to understanding the Bible.

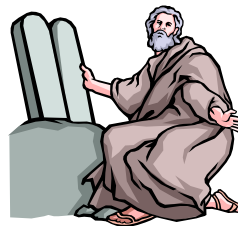
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – things we are to do or not do – shows us our sin and condemnation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – things God does to help or save us – shows us our Savior from sin |
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5

The law is said to have three uses.

- Curb
"helps to control violent outbursts of sin and keeps order in the world"
- Mirror
"accuses us and shows us our sin"
- Rule
"what we should and should not do to lead a God-pleasing life"



Quotes from Luther's *Small Catechism with Explanation* (1580), pp. 94-95.

6

The law and the Gospel include different things.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Commands – Promises with strings attached – Things people do – Wages earned – Conditional blessings – Threats of and punishment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promise – Love without any strings attached – Things God does – Gift given – Unconditional favor – Forgiveness and salvation |
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Photo: Betty Gaskamp



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The law and the Gospel are intended for “different people”.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Primarily those who need to see their sin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Those who have been brought to realize both their sin and need for a Savior |
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Believers need both law and Gospel; they have fallen and redeemed natures (they are both “saints” and “sinners”)



8

Law and Gospel do (and do not do) different things.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shows our sin, terrifies us – Kills us – Does not save or restore – May affect behavior but does not make better people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Saves us from sin, comforts us – Makes alive – Does not require or command – Renews from within and brings about praise and good works |
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Clues help us tell whether words are speaking law or Gospel.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law talk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have to – Ought – Must – Should – Amounts, measure, limits – People act | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel talk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Grace – Forgiveness – Gift given – Comfort – No measure, overabundance – God acts, not people |
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10

Even “Gospel” terms can wrongly be given “law” meanings.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Love as our love of God and neighbor – Faith as our work – Jesus as lawgiver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Love as God loving us in Jesus Christ – Faith as gift – Jesus as Gospel giver |
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