Law and Gospel

I. Introduction to the course

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C. How to prepare for each session

1. Read the chapters from the book.
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1. God's Two Proclamations

1. What are the similarities between the Law and the Gospel?

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3. The Law and Liberty

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3. In what way is the Christian life hidden?

4. Discuss legalism in religious terms.

5. What is “liberation theology”?

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3. Why can't we use guilt as a way of motivating people?

4. What are works of supererogation?

5. How does the Christian view the Law?

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7. Are good works necessary for salvation? Why or why not?

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Law and Gospel

1. God's Two Proclamations

II. God's Word is Twofold

A. One divine source

1. One divine word – Both the Law and the Gospel are the word of God and are delivered to us through His messengers. {*From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* 1 John 1:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* 2 Timothy 3:16-17}

2. One divine truth – The plan of salvation, which is the heart of the Scriptures, has remained the same throughout the Old and New Testament times. {*Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him.* Romans 16:25-26}

3. One divine will – Behind all of the statements of the LORD is His desire to save all mankind. {*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time.* 1 Timothy 2:3-6}

B. Two proclamations

1. Two kinds of messages
   a. Law – The Law is a message of obedience. To be saved, those who live under the Law must keep the Law perfectly. {*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.* James 2:10}
   b. Gospel – The Gospel is the good news that salvation is free to those who believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ. {*"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."* Mark 16:16a}

2. Universality of both messages – Both the Law and the Gospel apply to all people who ever lived or will live upon the earth. {*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* Romans 3:23-24}

3. Both were intended to produce life in man
   a. Law – The Law is God's will for a mankind that remained in harmony with His will. {*I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.* Romans 7:10}

b. Gospel – The Gospel is the message of life through faith rather than through deeds which must be done. {*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* John 20:31}

III. Law and Gospel – Perfect Opposites

A. Mode of revelation

1. Law
   a. In the heart – The Law was originally written in the heart of man when he was created by the LORD on the sixth day of creation. {*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* Genesis 1:27 *The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.* Psalm 37:30-31}
   b. Tablets of stone – Because the law in man's heart was corrupted by sin, God gave the Law in outline form in the Ten Commandments, with a lot of examples of application in both the Old and the New Testaments. {*The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction."* Exodus 24:12}

2. Gospel – The Gospel is totally alien to mankind. Man cannot conceive the nature of God's love because human reasoning is based on a *quid pro quo* view of reward and punishment. {*However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.* 1 Corinthians 2:9-10}

B. The content of Law and Gospel

1. Law – The Law speaks of the works of man and demands that they be in perfect conformity with God's will. {*"Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.' "* Leviticus 19:2}

2. Gospel – The Gospel speaks of the works of Christ which produced a righteousness which the LORD gives freely to those who believe. {*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.* Romans 3:21-22a}

C. The form of Law and Gospel

1. Law – The Law promises life and the LORD's blessings to those who keep it, but it also promises God's wrath to all who transgress any of its provisions. In short, there is a condition on the promise. {*"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."* Luke 10:28 *The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.* Deuteronomy 30:9b-10 *All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."* Galatians 3:10}

2. Gospel – The Gospel is the LORD's unconditional promise of forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe in the work and redemption of Jesus Christ. {*However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness*. Romans 4:5}

D. The effect of Law and Gospel

1. Law – The Law brings about God's wrath and our terror whenever we transgress it. There is no comfort in it, and the best we can hope for is to minimize its consequences upon us. {*"Do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this," declares the LORD.* Zechariah 8:17 *My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning.* Psalm 38:4-6}

2. Gospel – The Gospel brings about peace, comfort and joy because we know that our sins are forgiven and we are children of God. We have nothing to fear from our dear Heavenly Father. {*So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.* Titus 3:7}

E. Persons to whom they apply

1. Law – The Law applies to all people because all are descended from the first man created by the LORD. The Law must be particularly preached to those who trust in their own efforts for their salvation so that they will realize that they can do nothing to please the LORD and earn their own salvation. {*"When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself."* Ezekiel 3:18-19}

2. Gospel – The Gospel must be preached to those who have been crushed by the preaching of the Law and are troubled by their consciences because they recognize the greatness of their sins. {*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* Luke 4:18-19}

F. Two authorities, one higher – The Law and the Gospel are both the authoritative word of God to which we should give our undivided attention, but the Gospel is of higher authority because it overcomes the Law and is the only one that can save us. {*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* John 1:17}

IV. The Nature of the Law

A. Use of the term "law"

1. The entire set of teachings in the Scripture – The word translated as "law," תּוֹרָת in the Hebrew, has a much broader meaning than just a set of rules. It also can include the LORD's promises. In fact, it is not the primary Hebrew term for statutes and ordinances (כָּל־חֻקֹּתַי וְכָל־מִשְׁפָּטַי). {*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.* Psalm 1:2}

2. The Old Testament – The Jews at the time of Jesus used the wider meaning of the word תּוֹרָת to indicate all the words which God had spoken to them during the Old Testament period. The Greek word for law is νόμος. {*The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"* John 12:34}

3. The writing of Moses – The Jews divided the Bible into three sections, which were frequently referred to as "the Law," "the Psalms" (also called "the Writings") and "the Prophets," even though more was included in each section. This was an idiomatic use of the term "law." {*He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."* Luke 24:44}

4. Regulations given to Moses – When the Jews thought about their special relationship to the LORD, then they narrowed the Law to the commandments given through Moses. This included the moral law, the ceremonial law and the political law. {*"And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."* Deuteronomy 6:25}

5. Ten Commandments – When the Jews thought about their obligation to the LORD, some of them realized that it was the moral law and not the rest that was the essence of God's requirements. {*"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' ; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."* Luke 10:26-28}

6. A general regimen of rules – Greek is a "the-rich" language which has no indefinite article. It uses "the's" in front of nouns, adjectives and numerous phrases where it has to be omitted in translation. If there is no "the" in a place where one could be, that is significant. Paul carefully omits "the" when he is talking about a set of laws or the concept of regulation rather than the Law given through Moses. {*For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.* Romans 6:14}

7. The Gospel as a motivating force – When a person's heart has been transformed and a new person has been created in him, that person will want to serve Christ. That desire to serve Christ becomes a "law" which drives him to strive to please his benefactor, not out of fear of punishment but out of gratitude. {*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* Galatians 6:2}

B. The purpose of the Law

1. Mirror – The Law acts as a mirror by showing the sinner how terrible his sins are before the Almighty God.
   a. Unbeliever – The unbeliever does not have a reason to believe the Gospel because he does not think he is so odious to the LORD that he needs a Savior. Only through the preaching of the Law will he realize that he cannot save himself. {*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.* Genesis 6:5}

   b. Christian – Christians also are being continuously tempted to sin. As they learn God's Law more fully, they become ever more aware of how sinful they are and how much they need a Savior. {*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.* Isaiah 64:6a}

2. Curb – The Law acts a deterrent to gross sins in society because, being written into man's heart and proclaimed publicly, it pricks the conscience to warn the sinner of the drastic consequences of opposing the will of God. As a curb, the Law rightly only applies to unbelievers because Christians have a new person within them which strives against the temptation to sin and thereby acts as a check on the sinful nature. {*Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.* Romans 2:15-16}

3. Guide – Because the Law embodies the will of God for mankind, it is natural that the Christian would use the Law as a guide to learn how to please the LORD. Yet because the Law is only a summary of God's will, it cannot be used as a rulebook to judge all actions because actions must be motivated by the love of God, not mechanical obedience. Because the unbeliever cannot do good works, the Law is not a guide to him. {*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.* Psalm 119:105}

4. The Law must be the Law
   a. Knowledge of sin – The Law is intended to show sinners their true condition and through fear of God's wrath to coerce them to behave in a way that preserves human society on earth. It amplifies and exposes evil, but it can do no more. {*What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."* Romans 7:7}

b. Not a plan of salvation – God's Law behaves like the civil law of a nation. It is an obligation for people to keep the laws of their nation, and they are punished for not doing so. There is no reward in a criminal court for being less guilty than others or for doing charitable work as well as committing felonies. In the same way no one will receive the heavenly reward for good behavior. {*For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.* Galatians 3:21-22}

Law and Gospel

2. Gospel replaces Law

V. The Nature of the Gospel

A. Use of the term Gospel (good spell or good news)

1. The story of Jesus Christ – Jesus Christ is the center of God's plan of salvation, so a telling of His life, death and resurrection can be called the gospel. {*The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* Mark 1:1}

2. The whole word of God needed for salvation – Because the Law is needed to make belief in the Gospel possible, it too must be preached as part of the process of bringing the good news to people. Therefore, "preaching the gospel" can include preaching the Law. {*After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* Mark 1:14-15}

3. The good news of justification – The Gospel in the proper sense is the news of the objective justification effected by Christ's death and resurrection. {*For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."* Romans 1:17}

B. What the Gospel offers

1. A gift – There are no strings attached to the LORD's offer of free salvation. It is available to all who believe it without asking any payment from them. {*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* Matthew 11:28}

2. A *fait accompli* – What is offered is already available. There is no waiting period, nor is it an advertised pre-production special. It does not have to be custom made or gotten from a third-party supplier. {*He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.* Hebrews 9:12}

3. A full reconciliation – There is nothing lacking in the Gospel. There are no additional payments required, no shipping charges and no taxes. There is no assembly required. It can never be withdrawn, although the offer is only for a limited time, that is, the lifetime of each individual. {*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.* 2 Corinthians 5:18-19a}

C. The Gospel also effects what it offers

1. It must overcome resistance. – The human heart does not want an external Savior because that offends its pride. If saving is necessary, it wants to save itself. It finds the message of something-for-nothing to be suspicious and fears that God is trying to get leverage through such a deal. {*The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.* Romans 8:7-8}

2. It must be preached. – If the word of God is not proclaimed to the world, people will not know about it because it is not the type of plan the human mind would devise. The Bible and other books drawn from it are the only source of this message. Therefore we preach the content of the Scriptures. {*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.* Romans 10:17}

3. It changes hearts. – The message does more than change the belief in the heart, it changes the attitude of the heart toward God and toward His will. The burden of the commandments is replaced by the zeal of the believer who wants to please His LORD. {*Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.* Colossians 1:21-23}

D. Let the Gospel be Gospel

1. Not conditional on preparation – We do not have to prepare ourselves to receive the Gospel by cleansing our hearts or by making a decision for Christ. {*But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.* 2 Thessalonians 2:13}

2. Not conditional on strength of faith – The effects of the Gospel are not dependent on our faith reaching a certain level of maturity. Although His disciples continually failed to exhibit the type of faith that would be expected from those who had been with Jesus personally, He did not reject them. {*Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"* Matthew 14:31}

3. Not conditional on subsequent good works – The Gospel does not put us on probation until we accomplish certain reforms in our lives or do a certain number of good works. Even vile sinners will receive instant forgiveness. {*Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."* Luke 23:43}

VI. The Means of Grace

A. Word of God

1. Law prepares the heart for Gospel. – The Law is critical preparation for the Gospel. The Gospel is a remedy for the problem of the total depravity of all people. When someone does not believe they have a disease, they are not going to take the remedy for it, or are not going to be serious about administering it correctly if they are forced to take it. People must believe the Law in order to believe the Gospel. {*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.* Romans 3:20}

2. Gospel is the means of grace. – As important as the Law is for our salvation, the Law does not save. Just as the diagnosis of a deadly disease, no matter how accurately done, does not cure the disease, so the Law showing us our sin does not remove our sins, no matter how much we regret them. {*By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15:2}

3. Difference between Old and New Testaments
   a. Old Testament – The Law of God is laid out for the people with detailed applications in their lives. The Gospel is announced early, but the details are only filled in gradually as the time of the fulfillment approaches. {*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.* Deuteronomy 6:6-7a *"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.* Isaiah 1:18}
   b. New Testament – The applications of the Law are clarified and extended to new situations that have arisen over the course of history. The complete picture of the Gospel is given so that it can be proclaimed to the whole world. {*"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment."* Matthew 5:21-22 *"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."* Acts 10:43}

4. Using God's word – To be of benefit to people, the word of God must be regularly used. It is our powerful weapon for both defense and offense. It is the only tool that can build our faith and make us sure of our salvation. It is our link to our LORD. {*I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.* Psalm 119:16}

B. Sacraments

1. Old Testament
   a. Circumcision – Circumcision brought the male child under the covenant that God made with the children of Israel. Girls were brought under that covenant without any physical sign. {*"You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you."* Genesis 17:11}

b. Day of Atonement – The Day of Atonement was the time when the general sins of the people were atoned for by sacrifice to symbolize the reality that would take place when Jesus came to be the Lamb of God. The forgiveness of sins was announced to the people. {*"This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work--whether native-born or an alien living among you--because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you."* Leviticus 16:29-30}
c. Other non-sacramental days (Sabbath, New Moon, Passover, Pentecost) – Other days were established for the people to turn to their God to remember the good things that He had done for them and to study His word. These were not means of grace in the classic sense. {*"Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD."* Exodus 23:17}

2. New Testament
   a. Baptism – Baptism removes our sins and is therefore a means by which we receive the LORD's favor. It is the Gospel associated with water and serves as the entry sacrament into the Christian church. {*This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* 1 Peter 3:21}
   b. Lord's Supper – The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, is the continual reminder of the suffering and death that Jesus had to undergo to gain the forgiveness of our sins. We therefore partake of it often. {*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."* Matthew 26:28}
   c. Other non-sacramental acts (confirmation, marriage ceremony, ordination) – Over the years the Christian church has developed various customs that help us to remember what the LORD has done for us. While they do not forgive sins, they help us to understand the LORD's will. {*One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* Romans 14:5}

VII. God Sets His Law Aside

A. The establishment of the Law

1. The will of God – The will of God is how He requires mankind to behave to fulfill his purpose in God's creation. It is resistible in that man can disobey it, but he will be judged for that disobedience. {*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.* Romans 12:2}

2. Natural law – The natural law is the image of God's will that was written into Adam's heart at creation. Through the fall it has become corrupted by sin, and it is that sin-corrupted image that is passed from father to son. {*Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.* Romans 2:14-15}

3. Mosaic Law
    a. Moral – The moral law is God's will for mankind written in a set of commandments which is summarized in the Ten Commandments. {*Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.* James 1:21}
    b. Ceremonial – The ceremonial law is a set of behaviors and worship formats that the children of Israel were to follow to keep themselves from sin and to keep themselves in mind of the work of their Savior God. {*They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order.* Hebrews 9:10}
    c. Civil – The civil law is a set of rules of government to preserve civil order among the people of Israel under the guidance of the LORD. {*Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD.* 1 Samuel 10:25a}

B. Mission accomplished

1. Purpose of the old covenant
    a. Emphasize the holiness of God – So that the people would understand that the LORD was almighty and holy and was not just some human-devised god who could be bribed into doing the will of man, the LORD gave a covenant that required obedience and sacrifice for sin from His people. {*Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.* Deuteronomy 10:16-17}
    b. Create a human ancestry for the Savior – A Savior to have credibility before mankind needed some connection to the great God who had created the universe. He also had to be human. Both requirements were fulfilled through a special people separated by a special law. {*Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.* Romans 9:5}
    b. Prepare a mission force – When the Savior came, He would need a group of people who had some understanding of the will of God and His intentions to act as the nucleus of the mission force that would spread the news. {*Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.* Acts 18:24}

2. Abrogation of the old covenant
    a. No longer needed – Once the Christ had come, attention needed to turn toward Him. The work of preparation had been completed, and the main event was on stage. {*These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.* Colossians 2:17}
    b. Competition for free grace – If the people did not realize that the preparation was not part of the saving event, they would continue to work on something that was no longer needed and ignore the one thing that was needed. {*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.* Galatians 1:6-7}

C. Law in the New Testament

1. Separating moral law from ceremonial law – Over time many Jews had confused the relative importance of the moral and the ceremonial law. Some of Jesus' most pointed parables, like the Good Samarian, showed that the moral law had to trump the ceremonial. {*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness."* Matthew 23:23}

2. Showing the moral law by example – It is the tendency of mankind to narrow the moral law to the written words of Scripture, thereby turning the Bible into a law book. Jesus often expounded on the implications of the written law so as to show the people how God's will was to be understood. {*"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."* Matthew 6:24}

Law and Gospel

3. The Law and Liberty

VIII. Christian Liberty

A. What Christian liberty is.

1. The Christian is a new creation.
   a. New creature – Before we were reborn in Christ, we were prisoners of sin. We were so blinded to our condition and our reason was so poisoned against the LORD that we could not even grasp the idea of freedom from sin, death and the devil. {*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.* Ephesians 2:1-2}
   b. Liberated creature – When Christ paid the price of our sin and gave us His righteousness, we were reborn as children of the king and therefore not under the laws of the commoners. {*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* 2 Corinthians 5:17}

2. The Christian is completely free.
   a. Free from the Law – We are now free from the code of the Law. All laws involve details and cases showing a person how they are to behave. The Christian is free from service dictated by these details and cases. {*We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers.* 1 Timothy 1:9-10a *Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.* Romans 10:4}
   b. Free from guilt and punishment – Although Christians in their lives may disobey the letter of the Law or its spirit, their sins are not held against them as long as they believe in the forgiveness earned by Jesus Christ. {*But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* 1 Corinthians 6:11b *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.* Romans 8:33}
   c. Free from human opinion – It is natural for those forced to obey a set of laws to resent those who are not under them and want to bring them into the same state as they. They regard such slavery as a matter of "fairness." {*"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* Matthew 7:1}

3. Christian liberty and a strenuous effort in sanctification – While Christians are free from the Law, their thankfulness for the redemption won for them by Jesus will cause them to desire to please Him in all their actions. {*To be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* Ephesians 4:23-24 *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* Ephesians 2:10}

4. The Christian's real life is hidden.
    a. Troubled by the world – The world does not see the Christian life as glorious. Christians suffer at least as much worldly trouble as others in the best of times and more when times are not favorable. The world cannot understand why they want to live this way. {*"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* Matthew 5:11-12}
    b. Mind on things above – The Christian's behavior is governed not by what is best in this world, but by how he can serve His LORD and build His kingdom. {*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* Colossians 3:2-4}

B. How Christian liberty is challenged.

1. Giving up Christian freedom
    a. Judaizers – The early church was soon under attack from within by those who wanted to create their own rules for the religion. The Pharisees had greatly reshaped Judaism by their desire to encode everything, and some saw an opportunity to do the same to Christianity by joining the movement. {*You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.* Galatians 5:4}
    b. Adiaphora – Those things that are neither commanded nor forbidden by the Scriptures dare not be legislated by the church in regards to Christian behavior. While the church can do things in a uniform way for good order, it cannot create new doctrine. {*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.* Colossians 2:16-17}

2. Legalism
    a. Code of behavior – Throughout the Bible the LORD gives us directions on how the God-pleasing life is led. These "laws" are often conditioned by circumstance and the good of our neighbor. Legalism is the effort to make these and/or rules developed by men an absolute standard to judge behavior. {*Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.* Colossians 2:20-22 *Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?* 1 Corinthians 4:6-7}

b. Form rather than substance – Legalism looks at results and external behavior rather the health of souls of the people involved. {*"The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "* Luke 18:11-12}
c. Law motivation – Legalism motivates through the Law, using the threats of God's punishment to get people to perform the desired good works. {*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' "* Matthew 7:21-23 *And without faith it is impossible to please God.* Hebrew 11:6}

3. Christian liberty is not a license to sin.
   a. Offenses against God – Christian liberty is granted by the LORD to His children so that they can serve Him. This does not give them the right to be their own God by being the source of their own standards of behavior. {*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.* Psalm 1:1-2 *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!* Romans 6:15}
   b. Offenses against man – Christian liberty is misused when it is used in disregard to the health of the souls of those about us. When we do things that are legal for us to do but do them at a time or in a manner that disturbs the faith of others, then we sin by endangering their souls. {*Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.* 1 Corinthians 8:9}

4. Liberation theology
   a. Temporal emphasis – Liberation theology is an example of the tyranny of the urgent. When church people view the situation in their surroundings so pressing that they become more concerned with the temporal than the eternal, they begin to view themselves as agents of social change rather than agents of spiritual change. {*"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* Matthew 6:31-33 *For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* 1 Corinthians 2:2}
   b. Mixing church and state – Because rapid change in society can only occur through the state, liberation theology often becomes involved in trying to change the government by whatever means it has available (politics, revolution, etc.). {*Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.* Romans 13:1-2}

IX. Opposition to the Law - Antinomianism

A. Forms of Antinomianism

1. No Law for anyone
   a. Only the Gospel saves. – Some antinomianists argue that because only the Gospel saves, the preaching of the Law is unnecessary for anyone. The remnants of the Law within the human heart are enough to make people realize that they are sinners and need God's grace. Unfortunately, the Law in the heart has been so corrupted by our sinful environment that it is no longer able to show us the magnitude of our sins, and therefore the conscience looks for solace in other messages besides the Gospel. {*Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.* Romans 2:14-15}
   b. The Law was only needed before Christ came. - Some antinomianists acknowledge that preaching the Law had a purpose before Christ came upon Earth to keep the Jewish people together and curb sin, but claim the spread of the Gospel now shows such a superior way to God, that the Law has lost its significance. Man, however, is no different now than in the past, so the Law is still needed. {*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.* Isaiah 64:6a}

2. No Law for Christians
   a. Christians are no longer sinners. - Some antinomianists argue that Christians are no longer under the Law and therefore no longer commit sin. As a result, the Law should no longer be preached to them. {*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.* Romans 7:18-20}
   b. Gospel, not Law, should motivate. - Some antinomianists argue that since it is the love of God through the Gospel, not the Law of God, that must be the motivating factor in the lives of God's people, the preaching of the Law can only undermine the Gospel by making people serve from fear rather than love. People should pray to the Spirit for guidance rather than seeking answers in the written Law. {Matthew 5-7}

B. Dangers of antinomianism

1. No foundation for the Gospel
   a. Without sin a Savior is not needed. – Without a knowledge of sin, there is no need for the Gospel. Without the preaching of the Law, sin is ill-defined and its seriousness attenuated. This creates little, if any, interest in the Gospel. {*On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* Mark 2:17}

b. Gospel is offensive without the Law. – Because the Gospel presents a Savior who does everything for us to secure our salvation, it removes any human contribution. Humans reject anything that removes all their own merit and leaves them wholly dependent on someone else. {*Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.* Galatians 5:11}
c. Weak Law leads to weak Gospel. – When churches weaken the Law so that it is more palatable to "modern" mankind, they can also preach a weaker Gospel. If you can keep some of your sin, you can also keep some of your works and human dignity. This is a much easier sell to self-centered Americans. {*"Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."* Luke 7:47}

2. An ungodly church
   a. Each one doing what he pleases – When there is no Law, there is no standard of behavior and eventually no doctrine either. This is what happened in Israel during the period of the judges, when everyone did what was right in his own sight. {*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.* Judges 21:25}
   b. Pride in self – If the Law is not there to remove pride and self-reliance, people soon start looking on their own accomplishments as coming from them rather than from the power of the LORD working through them. Churches become complacent and feel they have reached spiritual utopia on earth. {*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud!* 1 Corinthians 5:1-2a}

3. Antinomianism in practice
   a. Law is not preached. – Some churches have abandoned the Law of the LORD as presented in the Bible altogether. Instead they preach only a gospel of love. Anything done in love is regarded as being God-pleasing and leading to a spiritual union with God, perhaps even to heaven if one exists. {*For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.* 2 Timothy 4:3}
   b. Law is revised. – Some churches have edited the Law in order to make it more palatable to the Twenty-first Century. Sins that have become socially acceptable have also become acceptable actions to these churches. {*"For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."* Mark 7:10-13}
   c. Law is limited to actions. – Some churches limit the Law only to the actual deeds, not the thoughts and words, of people. These do not condemn scheming and inappropriate talking unless actual harm is done to someone. {*"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.* Matthew 5:21-22a}

Law and Gospel

4. The Law and Good Works

X. The Third Use of the Law

A. What the Law is not to the Christian.

1. A way to heaven
   a. Only for the righteous – The Law was originally intended as the way for the righteous, that is, those who had never sinned, to live God-pleasing lives and go to heaven. When out first parents sinned, however, the whole human race lost the ability to keep the Law perfectly. This route is not open to sinners. {*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-- for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.* Romans 5:12-14}
   b. Condemnation for sinners – Those who do not keep the Law have been promised God's wrath. Once in debt to God because of sin, there is no way to be better than perfect to use the Law as a way to escape punishment. {*But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."* 1 Samuel 15:22}

2. A cookbook for living
   a. The moral law – Many argue that if one keeps the moral law in one's actions, one is meeting the standard that God has set, and He will reward such actions. They point to the Mosaic covenant which promises reward for obedience. The covenant, however, only applied to Old Testament Israel as a nation. {*All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."* Galatians 3:10-11}
   b. Counsels of Jesus – Others recognize that the Old Testament period is past, but they look at the statements of Jesus, like the sermon on the mount, and at statements by the apostles and claim this is a new Law intended for the New Testament believers. Law, however, is still law and not grace. {*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* Romans 3:20-24}

3. A way to guilt people into behaving
    a. Threats to punish – The Law is excellent for leveraging people to behave. Scared by the fear of punishment, ridicule or a troubled conscience, they will do things they are told to do. Alas, such obedience is the obedience of slavery and not pleasing to God. {*We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious.* 1 Timothy 1:8-9a}
    b. Jesus removed guilt – Jesus made clear that His message was one that removed the burden of guilt, not increased it. He came to free the prisoners bound by Satan with the chains of the Law. *{"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* Matthew 11:28 *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* Luke 4:18-19}

4. The basis for more laws
    a. Pharisaic hedge – Because keeping God's Law is essential, some, like the Pharisees and the monastic orders, argue that even more laws are necessary so that the believer will become so well disciplined that he will never offend against God's Law. Such laws gain nothing and often result in a degrading of God's Law. {*For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: `Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."* Matthew 7:10-13}
    b. Works of supererogation – To offset failure to keep God's Law perfectly, some urge people to do extra works, not required by the moral law, to gain God's favor. These non-required acts are supposed to be especially pleasing to God because they are not demanded, but are worthless when done for the purpose of pleasing God. {*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."* Mark 8:34-8}

5. Editable for modern man
    a. Change of cultures – Some argue that some portions of the Law, even the moral law, were specifically stated for the people of the Middle East and must be culturally reinterpreted for modern Western multi-cultural society. While it is true some things might need to be expressed differently, the rigorousness of the Law has not been negated. {*(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)* Romans 2:14-15}

b. Change of knowledge – Many argue that the Law was given in an era when much less was known about human psychology. They claim modern discoveries have made the Law obsolete, and it must be updated to address a new understanding of morality. {*For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.* 2 Timothy 4:3}

B. What the Law is to the Christian.

1. A look into the heart of God
   a. The source of love – God is love. He knew that a perfect universe required that everything be done according to His will because only He knew how to arrange things to avoid conflict. His Law is the loving directions for all to live together in harmony and service to Him. {*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.* Romans 12:2}
   b. The concern for man – After mankind sinned, it was no longer able to totally comprehend the perfect Law of God, so God gave the Law again through Moses and explained it further through the Prophets, Christ and the apostles, all to help man live in harmony with God's wisdom. {*Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.* Galatians 3:23-24}

2. A guide, but not a rulebook
   a. Words that are profitable – The explanations of the Law that are given in the Bible are useful to help the Christian understand how to live a God-pleasing life. The whole Scripture instructs us in what we need to know for righteous living. {*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* 2 Timothy 3:16-17}
   b. Never form over substance – Doing without believing, however, is not viewed with favor by God. When people started doing things that met the letter but not the spirit of the Law, God rejected their actions. {*"Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them."* Isaiah 1:14}

3. Applicable to modern man
   a. Avoiding vices that destroy – The Bible clearly lists the sins that are so dangerous that they destroy saving faith. Committing these and not repenting puts the heart into rebellion against God. This can happen even if the sins are committed only in word or thought. {*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* 1 Corinthians 6:9-10}

b. Examples of God-pleasing activity – The examples of Godly behavior in the lives of believers in the Bible and in the parables of Jesus, as well as the counsel of the apostles, are useful to help the Christian understand how to live a God-pleasing life. {*But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.* Matthew 5:44-45}

XI. Good Works

A. Good works are valuable

1. We are told to do good works. – The Bible gives us what might be called an "evangelical imperative" to do good works. Doing good works is a natural consequence of subjective justification. {*Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.* 1 Timothy 6:18}

2. Good works are consistent with God's will. – God is honored when those who believe in Him behave as if they have been changed by the existence of the new self created within them. {*"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* Matthew 5:16}

3. God rewards good works. – While the New Testament church does not have the type of guarantees of physical blessings offered to the children of Israel in the Mosaic covenant, the LORD tell us that He will take care of His own in this life and in eternity. {*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.* Galatians 6:9}

B. Good works are necessary

1. Because of justification – Someone cannot be a Christian and not do good works. To claim to have repudiated yourself and to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and still be centered on yourself is not possible. Justification produces the desire for sanctification. {*What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.* James 2:14-17}

2. Not for salvation – Despite their benefit, good works can never get anyone into heaven because they cannot offset the guilt of sin, anymore than a mass murderer would be exonerated because he was a bell-ringer for the Salvation Army. {*For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.* Galatians 3:21b-22}

C. The Christian and good works

1. Only Christians can do good works – Those who are not Christians are in open rebellion against God. Just a king of a country would not regard anything done by those in rebellion against him as being obedience to him, so the LORD does not accept as obedience the works of spiritual rebels.
   a. - {*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.* Luke 6:45}
   b. - {*Without faith it is impossible to please God.* Hebrews 11:6
   c. - {*For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.* Philippians 2:13}
   d. - {*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' "* Matthew 7:21-23}

2. No perfect sanctification – Although Christians want to please the LORD, they are continuously hindered by their sinful nature, which corrupts even their best intentions. Good works are never free of selfishness. It is only for Christ's sake that they are accepted. {*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.* Romans 7:18}

3. Only the Gospel motivates.
   a. Law produces hypocrisy. – Works produced by the urging of the Law are works that the doer can be justly proud of. Pride is therefore included in the infamous "seven deadly sins" because it turns the heart away from God. {*"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "* Luke 18:10-12}

   b. Good works are a response. – Good works occur when we see what the LORD has done for us. They should be as natural as saying "thank you" when someone does you a favor. {*Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* Ephesians 5:1-2}

4. Justification first – Unless something is alive, it cannot bear fruit. The dead can do nothing to make themselves better. Apart from Christ we were dead and could not do good works. {*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."* John 15:5-6}

5. Without a doubt – There can be no doubt about how we are saved. It is by grace alone through faith alone or it will not happen. There can be no two-pronged approach, where one assists the other. {*And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.* Romans 11:6}

Law and Gospel

5. Putting Things in Their Place

XII. Moralizing

A. What is moral?

1. Defining morality
   a. Bible – Biblical morality is based on the moral law of God, which Christians are to use to guide their behavior. {*We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* 1 John 2:3-4}
   b. State – The morality of the state is embodied in its laws. These laws are shaped by the natural law, which is the remnant of God's Law remaining in man's heart since the fall. Because people's hearts have been corrupted by sin, not everyone agrees as to what is proper moral behavior. {*Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.* Romans 2:14-15}

2. What is moralizing? – Moralizing is an attempt to improve moral behavior by preaching the merits of obeying a code of laws. Clearly, there are many benefits to people obeying God's commandments or the laws of a society. Encouraging people to be law-abiding therefore is a proper task for the state and for the school system. {*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.* Proverbs 14:34 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.* Proverbs 22:6}

3. Churches that moralize – When churches moralize, they change the focus of the people's motivation from the Gospel to the Law. Law motivation does not produce good works which are pleasing to God because they are done out of fear rather than love. {*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.* 1 Corinthians 13:1-3}

B. Dangers of churches moralizing

1. Loss of Gospel focus
   a. Competing interests – When a church begins to moralize, its members begin to look for ways of satisfying the need for "lawful" behavior. Because it is not easy for others to see moral improvement in one's personal life, people begin to look for corporate ways that the church can do God's will by improving society. This introduces the "social gospel" into the church, which then competes with the ministry of the Gospel for resources. (*"The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me."* Matthew 26:11)

b. Confusing trumpet – When people see various ways to serve in the church, they think that all ways are equally useful to the work of the ministry of the church. People who have the talents to do spiritual work often move toward the more visible temporal activities. Soon people no longer understand the purpose Jesus gave to the church. (*Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?* 1 Corinthians 14:5)

2. Wrong motivation
   a. Temporal – When dealing with commandments of the second table, Law motivation is always wrong. If one obeys the laws of society and helps one's neighbor only because one feels one has to do so to avoid punishment or reach some level of perfection, these works are judged by God on their imperfections and not regarded as good. {*"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' "* Mathew 7:22-23}
   b. Spiritual – While Law motivation to revere the LORD and study His word is not nearly as good as being motivation by the Gospel, for the Christian such motivation may still be of use because the Holy Spirit can work through the word to create the very Gospel motivation that leads to God-pleasing works. {*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.* Deuteronomy 6:6-9}

3. Merit in good works – When the curses of the Law or the hope of emotional satisfaction drives people to do good works and live upright lives, they naturally rejoice when they succeed. Such success brings with it the desire to reward themselves for the improvements they have made. When people begin looking to what they have done rather than what God has done, they have left the invisible church. {*When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.* Deuteronomy 8:10-14}

4. Uncertainty of salvation – When the church sets standards for the moral purity and character of its members, some will never feel that they have complied with the standards and become uncertain about their salvation. They will always be asking themselves whether they have done enough. {*Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, " 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' " "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"* Matthew 19:15-20}

XIII. Catechism and Confessions

A. Life of Luther

1. Law without Gospel – The Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was built around promoting salvation through good works. To keep pressure on the members of the church to behave in the way the church desired, it used the Law and guilt as its motivators. Avoiding sin was not so important as paying for it by prescribed deeds of service and contribution for designated purposes that the church proclaimed as meritorious before God. This continual pounding with the Law left Luther feeling helpless to save his soul.

2. The building storm – In college Luther was exposed to monks who seemed to be living precisely the life that Luther had been told was the surest way to salvation. When his conscience troubled him, he would look upon his chosen profession of the civil law as giving inadequate opportunities to save his soul. Finally, when scared by what he saw as God's threatening hand against him in a storm, he vowed to seek entry into the most rigorous local monastery.

3. The suffering monk – The monastic life did little to improve Luther's mental and spiritual health. Luther's sins kept coming back to him in ever larger form. While others accepted the assurance of the church that they were on the right road, Luther had no confidence that the road was effective enough for someone who had sinned as badly as he. Luther undertook the study of the Scriptures as diversion ordered by his superior to try to redirect his mind.

4. God's righteousness revealed – Much to his surprise Luther discovered in the Bible that the righteousness of God which was necessary to withstand God's judgment was not a righteousness that we had to earn, nor could earn, but the righteousness that God gave freely to all men. The Gospel, not the Law, was the message through which salvation was to be obtained.

B. Luther's catechisms

1. Law – Luther covered the Law in terms of the Ten Commandments. For each commandment he included the sins and obligations that the commandment covered, rather than the simple statement of Exodus 20. Jesus had shown how to do this in His sermons and discussions, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. Luther aimed at showing how the heart offends against the Law when it begins to contemplate actions that place the self before the LORD and the good of the neighbor. In his explanations of the commandments, Luther placed the respect for and the love of God as the cornerstone for keeping the commandments.

2. Gospel
   a. Apostles' Creed – In discussing the second article of the Apostles Creed, Luther brings out the message of the Gospel by describing all that Jesus has done for our salvation. Here pure grace is on display.

b. Sacraments – Luther also discusses Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper as means by which the LORD showers His grace upon us. These are not merely things which the LORD commanded us to celebrate, but they have the power to forgive sins and build faith in the Christian.

B. Lutheran Confessions

1. The Augsburg Confession and the Apology – In writing these, Philip Melanchthon presented the Scriptural doctrine of Law and Gospel. He needed to separate them from the muddle that surrounded their teaching in the Roman church. It was this confession and its apology that forced the Roman Catholic Church to call the Council of Trent in an effort to define what it actually did teach.

2. Smalcald Articles – Fearing that his teachings would be misinterpreted and changed after his death, Luther wrote what amounts to his personal confession of faith in the Smalcald Articles. Although political wrangling prevented the articles from being adopted by the Smaldcald League, they were later incorporated into the Book of Concord, the official confessions of the Lutheran church.

3. Formula of Concord – As he feared, after Luther's death, some of his followers began to add to, subtract from and reinterpret the Biblical truths about the Law and Gospel that he had worked so hard to return to their proper place in the Christian church. Martin Chemnitz led a small group of dedicated Lutheran theologians in drafting in stages documents which culminated in a settling of these matters. It was accepted by more than eight thousand Lutheran pastors at the time.