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**A Summary Workbook on
"The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel"
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Point 15

The eleventh way that people mix up the Law and the Gospel is when the preacher uses the Good News (Gospel) of free salvation to warn people to repent.

When interpreting the Bible correctly, it is important to notice that certain words are used in both a broad (wider) sense and a narrow (more specific) sense. Here are some examples:

SANCTIFICATION: The basic meaning of the word is to "make holy, set apart for God."

This word has a broad (wider) sense in passages such as 1 Thessalonians 5:23,

"May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." In this wide sense the Holy Spirit sets the sinner apart through faith in Jesus, and keeps him in that faith all the way to eternal life.

This word has a narrow (more specific) sense in passages such as Hebrews 10:14,

"For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." In this narrow sense believers become more holy, day by day, by the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

REPENTANCE: The basic meaning of this word is to "change your mind or turn."

This word has a broad (wider) sense in passages such as Acts 2:38, where Peter told the crowd on the day of Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Here, when Peter says "repent," he is speaking of both sorrow over sin and trust in the Savior.

This word has a narrow (more specific) sense in passages such as Mark 1:15, "Repent and believe in the gospel." Here, John the Baptist speaks only of sorrow in the heart about sin, which is necessary first in order to receive God's grace through faith.

GOSPEL: The basic meaning of this word is "good news."

This word has a broad (wider) sense in passages such as Romans 2:16, "...on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." Here the word "gospel" means all the teachings that Paul brought to the churches, including both Law and Gospel.

This word has a narrow (more specific) sense in passages such as Romans 1:16, "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." Here the word "gospel" means the part of God's Word that converts the sinner to faith in Christ.

Many preachers do exactly the wrong thing when they take the word "gospel," in its narrow sense, and tell people that God's grace should lead them to be sorrowful over their sins. The grace of God in the Gospel (in this narrow sense) has nothing to do with commandments, guilt, or sorrow. It has only to do with God's love, mercy, and his gift of full and free forgiveness in Christ. Here are some examples of the correct meaning of the "Gospel" in its narrow, specific sense:

1) Whenever "Gospel" is contrasted with "Law," it means only the message of God's grace (the narrow sense of "Gospel"). "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

2) Whenever the message is preached to poor sinners, this is the Gospel in the narrow, saving sense.

"...the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them." (Matthew 11:5)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed." (Luke 4:18)

3) When saving faith is named as the result of preaching the Gospel, this is in the narrow, saving sense.

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15)

"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16)

When the true Gospel of God's forgiving grace is proclaimed, this should bring only comfort, confidence, and joy. It is not meant to lead a person to sorrow over sin. Only the message of God's Law does that.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between the wide and narrow use of the word "repentance"?
2. What is the difference between the wide and narrow use of the word "gospel"?
3. What is the message from God that the Holy Spirit uses to lead a person to repent?
4. Why is it wrong to tell people that the Gospel of God's grace in Christ should lead them to repent?
5. How can you tell if a passage that has the word "gospel" is using it in a wide or narrow sense? Give examples.