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**A Summary Workbook on
"The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel"
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Point 19

The fifteenth way that people mix up the Law and the Gospel is when the preacher makes some sins sound worse than others. In fact, God's Law condemns all sins.

It is true that there is a difference between the common sins that we commit every day and the kind of sins that drive out the Holy Spirit from our hearts. The Bible describes the terrible nature of this second kind of sin:

"For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:5-6)

Note carefully that every sin has been paid for by Christ, and every sin is fully forgiven when brought to the Lord in repentance and faith. This includes the kind of sins that are described here in Ephesians chapter 5. However, here Paul is talking about those who continue in such sins on purpose. By willfully continuing in such sins, a person drives the Holy Spirit from his heart. When the Holy Spirit is driven from a person's heart, that person is enslaved to sin and is controlled by it. Such a person does not belong to God at all.

Yes, Christians do continue to commit sins every day, but these are sins of weakness or compulsion. They are sins that the Christian confesses before God. He is then comforted to know that God forgives him because of Jesus.

However, the Christian pastor must be careful so that he does not give people the wrong idea, as though these daily sins of Christians are not serious or dangerous. He should not give people a false idea like this: "There's no real danger here...since no one is perfect, there is no real need to repent of little sins like these." This is a false and ungodly idea. Jesus said:

"Truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:18-19)

In this chapter of Matthew, Jesus says that he did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. Since Jesus has done such a great work, it would be shocking for a sinner to say that there are some laws of God which really aren't very important. Only an unchristian person thinks that way. The real Christian stands in awe of Jesus' work. He considers every law of God to be of great importance, and has a holy fear about breaking any of them.

Note also that Jesus had a special word of warning about the man who "teaches others to do the same." We must be very careful in our preaching and teaching that we never give people the idea that some sins are "little," and of no importance. "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak." (Matthew 12:36)

It would be the worst kind of "careless word" to tell people that some sins don't matter very much. Yes, God is love, but he is also a holy God who visits judgment on those who oppose him. Is there anyone who can say, at the end of the day, that he has not spoken even a single worthless word? Even for this kind of sin we need to repent and seek God's forgiveness, as we strive to do better in the future. This is the reason why ANY sin can bring about our damnation, if we do not humbly bring it to the cross of Christ.

There are many passages that clearly show that there is no such thing as a "little" sin:

"For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it." (James 2:10)

"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by ALL things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.'" (Galatians 3:10)

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire." (Matthew 5:21-22)

We see from the Bible that: A) If you break any of God's commandments you have broken all of them; B) We are accountable for ALL things written in the Law, not just the "big" things; C) Even a "little" sin like calling someone a fool makes us guilty before God.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by "original sin"?
2. What kinds of daily sins do Christians commit?
3. What makes these common, daily sins different from those done by unbelievers?
4. Spiritually speaking, there are only two kinds of people. What are these two kinds?
5. There are only two possible destinations after a person dies. What are they? What kind of person will arrive in one or the other?
6. Why is a true Christian free from sin before God, even though he sins every day?
7. What should you say to a person who says he is a Christian, but goes on living in a certain sin on purpose?
8. If a person is truly repentant before God, how will this show in his life?