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**A Summary Workbook on
"The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel"
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Point 25

The twenty-first way that people mix up the Law and the Gospel is when a preacher does not allow the Gospel to be the most important part of his preaching.

It is a terrible and harmful thing if a preacher only tells people about God's commandments and how he requires them to live holy lives. Many of his listeners will say one of two things: He will either say 1) "That's just what I'm already doing! I must be a good person, and therefore God will take me to heaven!" This is sinful pride speaking, and will lead a person to hell as another kind of Pharisee. Or, he will say 2) "I'm not doing that at ALL! God cannot love a wicked person like me!" This is despair speaking, and will lead a person to hell as another kind of Judas.

No, you must not preach sermons that only talk about what God wants US to do. You must also bring the Gospel, which tells us what GOD has done for us by giving Jesus to us as a ransom for all of our sins.

The point of this chapter is to add something else. Not only should you preach both Law and Gospel, but the Gospel must have the emphasis in your preaching. Consider these Bible examples:

"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:14) Here the angel over the fields of Bethlehem showed us what our message should be. True, we must preach the Law in order to prepare people's hearts by repentance, but our real goal must be to preach the Gospel of God's peace and good will in Christ.

"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) The Gospel is here in two ways: 1) It is a joyful message that simply trusting in Jesus and receiving his grace in Baptism means we will be saved. 2) A person cannot be condemned because of his many sins, but only because he will not believe.

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) When you are preaching, this good news should also be the matter of FIRST importance. You should stand up in church to speak with great joy, because you have such great news to share!

If you do not mix up Law and Gospel, your real goal will be to comfort the hearts of your listeners with the good news about Jesus. When you do this faithfully, you will notice that very good things are happening in the lives of your members. They will gladly do good works, not because they must, but because of the great love of God in their hearts.

Sadly, sometimes it is hard to see true spiritual growth in your people. Perhaps it looks like they are still spiritually sleepy, or still caught in sinful habits. The reason for this is that you are not preaching enough of the GOSPEL. Make it your goal, after preaching the Law, to melt their hearts with the love of God! Then they will realize that God's great love is too strong for them, and that they now want to stay with Jesus and live by his Word.

Yes, it is also an important goal to have true doctrine, and to educate the people about the many truths of the Bible. However, this won't do them any good if you mix up Law and Gospel. It is not enough to preach

the Law ALONG WITH the Gospel; your preaching and teaching must put the greatest EMPHASIS on the Gospel. This is what Paul was talking about when he told the Corinthians "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the two ways that people will respond if you only preach about God's commandments and warnings against sin?
2. How does Mark 16:15-16 present the Gospel in two ways?
3. What did Paul consider to be THE most important thing in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4?
4. Which Bible teaching will make people want to do good works? Explain why this is so.
5. Why is it not enough to teach the Law ALONGSIDE the Gospel?
6. Why should the pastor have joy in his heart when he stands up to preach in church?